

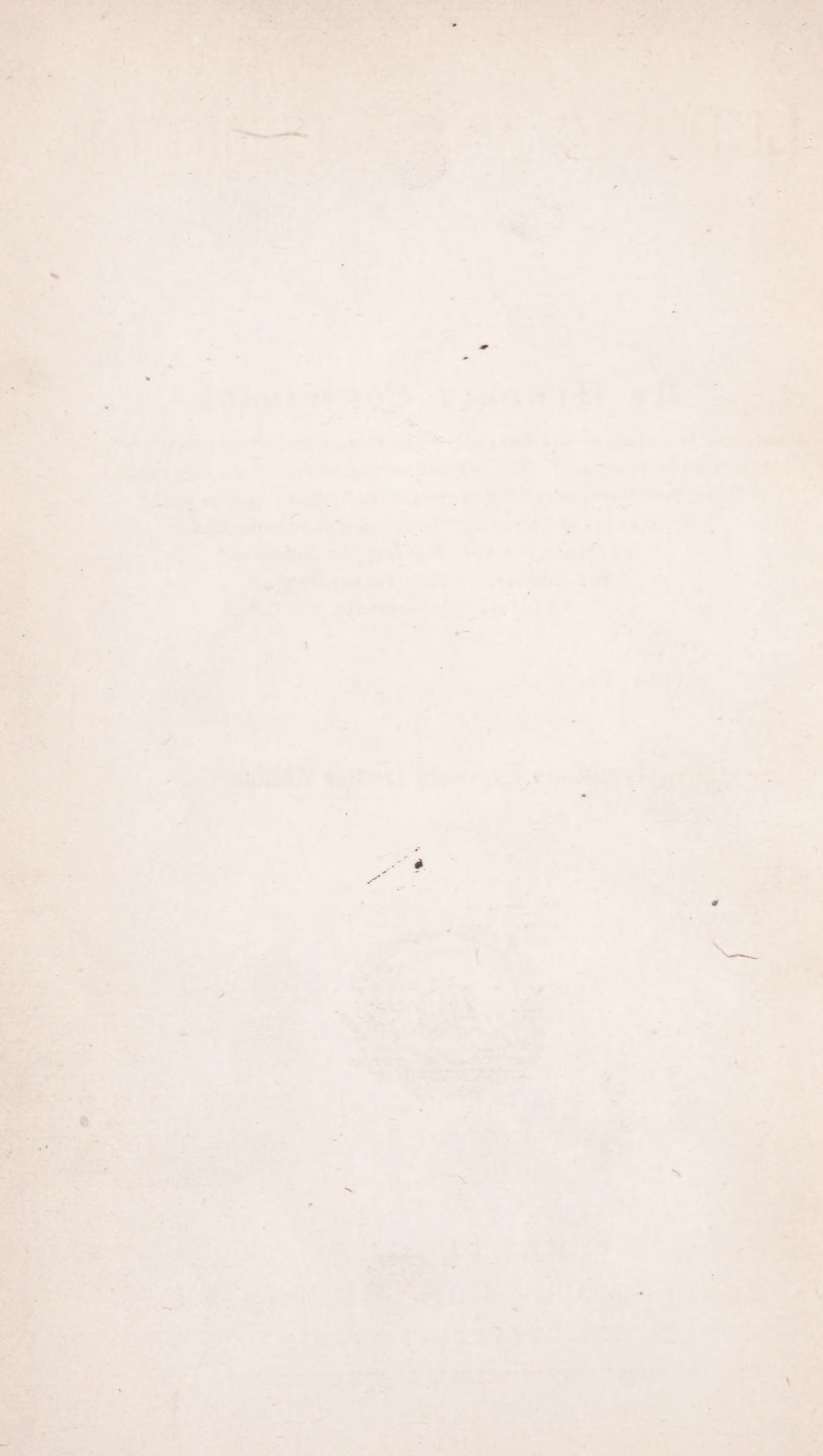


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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



LUDOVIC AND GERTRUDE.

✓
BY HENDRIK CONSCIENCE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CURSE OF THE VILLAGE," "THE HAPPINESS OF BEING RICH," "VEVA,"
"THE LION OF FLANDERS," "COUNT HUGO OF CRAENHOVE," "WOODEN CLARA,"
"THE POOR GENTLEMAN," "RICKETICKETACK," "THE DEMON OF GOLD,"
"THE VILLAGE INN-KEEPER," "THE CONSCRIPT," "BLIND ROSA,"
"THE MISER," "THE FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER,"
"THE AMULET," "THE YOUNG DOCTOR,"
"LUDOVIC AND GERTRUDE."

Translated Expressly for this Edition.



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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE scene of this romance is laid in Antwerp, during the period when Flanders was under the dominion of Spain, and when the terrible Duke of Alva, as representative of Philip II., ruled the country with an iron rod. The Flemings had banded themselves together under the name of *Gueux*, and swore to free their native land from the hated yoke of the foreigner, or die in its defence. But whilst high and lofty motives had made conspirators of Antwerp's best and noblest men, associated with these chivalric souls, whose spring of action was true patriotism, was another class of men, who made love of country a cloak for dark and deep designs. They hated the faith of the Spaniards rather than the nation, and to exterminate their faith from Flanders was the secret determination of many of the *Gueux*, whilst others rejoiced in anticipation over the booty to be gained by the pillage of churches and monasteries. Many unwary Catholics fell into the snare and swelled the number of the *Gueux*, persuaded that they were about to draw their swords in the cause of freedom. Among those thus deluded was Godmaert, a man whose high birth was illustrated by every Christian virtue. He soon became their acknowledged leader, and by his influence won over Ludovic, a young

noble, to whom he had promised the hand of his daughter, Gertrude. The first duty imposed upon Ludovic was to seek an outlawed bandit chief, Wolfangh, and by promises of a large reward engage him and his band to aid the Gueux upon the breaking out of the revolt, which they had planned for an early day. Unpalatable as was the mission, he was bound by oath to obey his chief, Godmaert.

In the meantime, whilst he was discharging the duty assigned him by Godmaert, Godmaert himself had been torn from his daughter's arms, upon a false charge made by a Spanish cavalier, thrown into prison, and subjected to torture until he was supposed to be dead.

The efforts made by Gertrude and, after his return, by Ludovic to obtain admission to Godmaert's prison are touchingly described; also their success, through the exertions of Father Francis, a Dominican monk; the meeting between Godmaert and Gertrude, and their hope of obtaining his release, founded upon Father Francis's influence with the Governor.

At last the day appointed for the insurrection arrived — a day whose excesses are familiar to all acquainted with the history of the time. Conscience describes with much spirit the fury of the lawless mob, against which the small force of the Spanish was powerless. Churches were sacked, statuary and paintings, the pride of Antwerp, were broken to

pieces or torn in shreds; monasteries were demolished, and the peaceful inmates put to death. Ludovic and Wolfangh—the latter of whom was deserted by his band, who scattered in search of booty—were forced to see the frenzied crowd rushing on to the work of destruction without being able to stay their mad career. Wolfangh having succeeded in collecting a few men, liberated Godmaert from prison and conveyed him to his own home. Ludovic sought Father Francis, found him in his monastery, of which the mob had taken possession, forced him to accompany him, risked his own life to protect the holy priest, and exposed himself to receive the stones aimed at the religious. He was on the point of being overpowered, when Wolfangh appeared, and conveyed the Father, with Ludovic's aid, to Godmaert's house. But the good old man had been mortally wounded, and he died a martyr to the faith, consoling Godmaert, who had directed the revolt, but who now saw the fatal error he had committed. Father Francis, grateful to Ludovic for his filial devotion, desired that Gertrude would bestow her hand upon him, and gave them his benediction. S. J. F.

Baltimore, March, 1875.

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LUDOVIC AND GERTRUDE.

CHAPTER I.

THE GUEUX.

IT was the 16th of August, A. D. 1566.

The night was dark; the rain had been falling incessantly during the day, and the streets of Antwerp were covered with water. No light was visible save that cast by the wax candles which some pious inhabitants had placed before the images of the saints.*

At that period, few persons dared trust themselves in the streets at midnight; for the diversity of religious opinions had been the cause of violent animosities between the citizens. The watchman alone, armed with a pike and carrying a lantern, was traversing the city on the night of which we speak.

“The clock strikes twelve!” he exclaimed, suddenly, and quick as a flash he disappeared in a by-street.

“He is gone,” said a man who had been concealed behind the pump of the cattle-market, and who now emerged from his hiding-place, followed by a companion. They both wore broad-brimmed hats, and

* Even at the present day, the streets of Antwerp are adorned by numerous statues: the greater part of them represent the Blessed Virgin.

around their shoulders were flung wide, brown cloaks, but the light was too feeble to permit the remainder of their attire to be distinguished.

“Did I understand you aright, Mr. Conrad, that our friends have assembled?” said one of them.

“Yes; to-night the great affair will be decided. If we succeed in gaining to our party the terrible Wolfangh and his band, the work will soon commence. But it behooves us to make haste; I think the guards from the citadel are coming in this direction.”

They passed cautiously in the rear of the butchery and entered a narrow street. When they reached the fish-market, the first said to his companion:

“By what means shall we obtain the assistance of Wolfangh? We have but little money, and the least revelation of our plans might cost us our lives.”

“Godmaert has arranged all that,” replied Conrad; “he has engaged in our interest a young nobleman, who appears to be under obligations to him. We will make use of this gentleman. He seems to me, however, to be somewhat friendly to the Spaniards. This very day he will be made acquainted with our designs, and if he refuses to take the oath by which we have all bound ourselves, I know a way to prevent him from revealing what he may have learned at our assembly.”

He drew from his bosom, with an ominous smile, a dagger, the blade of which glittered in the flickering light shed by the candles which were burning before a statue of the Blessed Virgin.

They pursued their way in silence until they

reached the short street of Peteer-Pot. In this narrow alley, they stopped before an isolated house, and thrice let fall gently the knocker upon the door.

"Who is there?" demanded a hoarse and trembling voice behind the grating.

"Dagger and wallet!" they replied, in a low tone.

The door opened, and it was again bolted after admitting the new-comers.

"Are all the Gueux here?" asked Conrad.

"All, with the exception of Godmaert," replied the old woman. "Come in, I beg you; these gentlemen are keeping up a brisk conversation. I am only an old woman, but in my opinion they would do better were they to talk less, for who knows but that there may be spies in the house?"

"What mean you by that, mother?"

"Yes, yes, Mister Conrad, there is in the room a deceitful-looking youth to whom I would not intrust a shilling."

"Be quick, and attend only to your own affairs," said Conrad, as he opened the door of a room at the extremity of the passage.

The apartment which they entered was large, and the walls were hung with gilded leather. Under the broad mantle-piece of carved stone blazed a clear fire. Two iron lamps suspended from the ceiling dimly lighted the whole room. On an oval table, covered with jugs of wine, lay a few open letters, a large wallet, several pistols and daggers. In one corner stood a small desk holding an ebony crucifix.

About twenty persons were seated around the table upon heavy chairs rudely carved. Like the newly-arrived guests, they all wore brown cloaks and

broad-brimmed hats. Their mustaches were not curled, according to the style of the Spaniards, but they fell thick over their lips. A poniard thrust into a leathern belt gleamed ominously as the dim light fell upon it; on their breasts they wore a golden medal upon which was engraven a wallet—the proof that they prized the name of *Gueux*, although it had been applied to them as a term of contempt. Numerous flagons of beer and wine were upon the table; but the guests used wooden bowls instead of glasses.

Seated apart, at a distance from these revellers, and absorbed in thought, was a young gentleman; his head, resting upon his hand, was turned towards the wall. His features were remarkably fine. He was tall and well proportioned, and his black hair fell in curls upon his shoulders. He wore neither cloak nor dagger, nor anything which could mark him as one of the *Gueux*. Whilst their doublets were of a sombre gray, the young noble was richly clad in silk and velvet. His left hand rested lightly on the golden hilt of a long rapier, whose steel blade yielded to the slightest impression. On Conrad's entrance, he glanced at the noisy assembly; a disdainful smile curled his lips and a frown contracted his brow, as the word "fools" escaped him.

"Good-evening, Houtappel, Van Halen, Schuermans, de Rydt, Van der Voort; good-evening, brethren?" said Conrad, seating himself at the table.

"You are welcome!" they replied, as they emptied their bowls of beer.

"Where are you, old witch?" called out Van der Voort.

“Here, here!” answered the ragged hostess: “shall I serve beer to these gentlemen?”

“Certainly!” they exclaimed. “The Gueux would by themselves drink the Scheldt dry, if its waters were as delicious as the wine of Mother Schrikkel.”

“But, Van Halen, tell me,” said Conrad, pointing to the young man seated by himself, “what is that elegant young lady doing in our society? He looks more like a bride than a member of the Gueux.”

“Godmaert alone knows what use we can make of him; he has forbidden any insult to be offered him.”

“What matters that?” said Schuermans, who had been drinking deeply. “Noble sir,” he called out, “approach the table. If you refuse to empty this bowl of wine, I pronounce you to be a Belgian false to your country. Do you hear me, young man?” he added, raising his voice.

Ludovic arose:

“Yes,” he replied; “I understand you perfectly, and, but for the obedience I owe to the instructions of Godmaert, I would demand satisfaction upon the spot for your insulting language.”

“Are you noble?” demanded the infuriated Schuermans, seizing his poniard.

“More noble than yourself,” said Ludovic; “since you sully the name you bear by conduct unbecoming a man who has the honor to carry the wallet.”

“You shall answer for your insolence with your life!” exclaimed Schuermans, springing to the other side of the table, and attempting to plunge his dagger in Ludovic’s breast. By a skilful movement, the young man parried the thrust.

In an instant twenty poniards were drawn from their scabbards and glittered in the air. With the noise of the blows dealt by the two adversaries, were mingled the entreaties of those present that they would be reconciled; but all efforts were vain. Schuermans, foaming with rage, sought to bury his poniard in the heart of Ludovic. The spectators endeavored to part the combatants; they jostled each other; they vociferated; the bowls rolled on the floor; the chairs were overturned, and the tumult was such that no individual could obtain a hearing or aid in restoring calm.

The old woman called out to them that the guard was at the door; she threatened them with the prison and the scaffold; the combat still continued.

Schuermans was determined to kill the young man; but he, seeing the danger, drew his sword. At the same moment blood spouted against the wall, and the unfortunate Schuermans fell senseless to the ground.

Ludovic withdrew his rapier from the wound, and, deeply dejected, cast down his eyes.

They carefully removed Schuermans' garments, and were stanching the blood which flowed from his wound, when the knocker thrice resounded upon the door.

"O my God!" exclaimed the old woman, in terror; "they have come!"

"Who?" demanded Rydt.

"The soldiers of the guard," answered Mother Schrikkel.

"Keep quiet," said Conrad. "I will see what is the matter. Who is there?" he called out behind the grating.

“Dagger and wallet!” answered a calm, grave voice.

A few moments afterwards the old Godmaert entered the room, which was sprinkled with blood. Stupefied, he stood upon the threshold, glancing angrily at the inanimate body of Schuermans.

“What does this signify?” he demanded, in a severe tone. “Have you forgotten your oath to defend each other even unto death, and to stain your swords only with Spanish blood? Woe to him who, in violation of his plighted word, has shed the blood of a Gueux?”

All were silent, confused, and sorrowful in the presence of the old man whom they had selected for their chief.

“Who committed this crime?” he asked.

Van der Voort related to him what had just occurred. Godmaert listened to the recital with indignation. After glancing sternly at Ludovic, he turned to the wounded man and exclaimed, in a voice of thunder:

“Schuermans!”

At the call of his friend and chief, he opened his eyes as if awakening from a deep sleep.

“Schuermans,” said Godmaert, “why did you not obey my orders? I grieve to see that so few among you understand the means to be adopted in order to attain the object we have in view. Why did you insult Ludovic?”

Schuermans, who had been restored to his senses by the loss of blood, soon collected his ideas, and replied, in a feeble but distinct voice:

“The wine made my blood boil, Godmaert. I

acknowledge that I was wrong in disobeying your commands, and in not permitting this young man to dream undisturbed in the corner. I cheerfully pardon him for the wound he inflicted upon me, and which, thanks be to God, is not mortal; but I swear that, so long as Ludovic does not drink to the health of the Gueux, I shall regard him as a friend to Spain, and I will not consider him as a member of our society."

"Ludovic! Ludovic!" exclaimed Godmaert, "do you forget, imprudent young man, that you must be prepared to sacrifice self-love and personal feelings to love of country? I command you to approach the table and drink a bowl of wine."

He extended a full cup towards Ludovic, who took it with a trembling hand and very reluctantly.

"So be it!" said the young nobleman. "To the health of all true lovers of the country!"

He touched the cup with his lips, but Godmaert caught his arm so hastily that the wine streamed over the rich clothing of the young man.

"To the health of the Gueux!" exclaimed Godmaert. "The Gueux—that is the name of the patriots!"

Ludovic, pale and sad, looked upon the cup in despair.

"Godmaert," he cried, with energy, "to what do you compel me? Can I drink to the health of the enemies of my religion? Oh, spare me this treachery!"

Godmaert's face expressed the anger which agitated him. He was deeply wounded by Ludovic's resistance to his will.

“Who told you,” he said, bitterly, “that the Gueux were the enemies of religion?”

“Would that they were not!” replied the young man, with impetuosity. “I would, with my whole heart, in that case, unite my efforts with theirs. I, too, would detest the Spaniards, were they not the sole defenders of the faith.”

“He loves the Spaniards!” cried out the Gueux, indignantly. “Away with the traitor!”

“I do not love the Spaniards,” said Ludovic, energetically. “Understand me, gentlemen, I do not love them. To them my family owes its ruin. But I regard them as the only confederacy which can arrest the progress of the reformers and successfully oppose the attacks made upon our religion. Reflect seriously upon what you are about to do; if you drive out the Spaniard, you open the Low Countries to the heretics, the Iconoclasts, the scum of a foreign soil, already prepared to pour like a torrent upon our country, and to destroy there every vestige of the faith of our fathers.”

The expression of Godmaert’s face changed at once, and he became calm and gentle. The old man said to Ludovic:

“I see with pride, Ludovic, your attachment to the religion of your ancestors. You know well, that I myself have fostered this sentiment in your heart; that I intrusted you to the care of a most venerable priest. It may be that Father Francis, who knows little of the ways of the world, has mistaken our intentions and misunderstood the means we intend to adopt. In the same manner, you yourself are acting at this moment under a false impression.

Our only object is to combat the enemies of our country. You should lend us your aid, and you will do so; it is my wish. Receive the advice of a man much older than yourself, and who was appointed by your own father to be your guide through life."

Ludovic bowed his head, and said, with a deep-drawn sigh:

"That is true! I may be mistaken. What do you command me to do?"

"Drink to the health of the Gueux."

The young man seized the bowl, raised his eyes to heaven, and exclaimed:

"O, my God! pardon me, if what I do is displeasing in Thy eyes! To the health of the Gueux!"

All present joined with Godmaert in exclamations of joy, as though they had been victorious over an enemy. Ludovic's scruples awakened a smile on more than one face. Van Halen alone remained serious and thoughtful; the words just uttered had made a deep impression upon him, and inspired him with a feeling of mistrust.

"Gentlemen," he said, "do not despise the sentiments of this young man; perhaps he alone sees things in their true light."

Godmaert feared that a conversation upon this subject might endanger the realization of his designs, and he interrupted Van Halen, saying:

"Which of us, gentlemen, desires to remain longer under the bondage of Spain? Not one. Why then discuss a point foreign to the question? Permit Ludovic to entertain his opinion unmolested: it is praiseworthy. He will aid us in delivering our country; have confidence in him; he is a noble and loyal gentleman."

Van Halen approached Ludovic, and, taking his hand, said in a low tone:

“You have a noble heart. I applaud your course; but tell me, what would you do were the Spaniards to attack your countrymen?”

Ludovic reddened as the question was put to him. He lifted his head proudly, and said:

“I would shed my blood for my brethren. But if the Spaniards should come into our country solely to expel the foreigners who have entered it for the purpose of disseminating false doctrine, I would not hesitate to combat for the faith under their flag.”

Van Halen replied by a warm pressure of his hand. Happily, Godmaert heard none of these side remarks, for he would have been much displeased.

The room was soon restored to its original condition. The old woman had wiped the spots of blood from the wall; the chairs were replaced; the flagons were filled, and each guest resumed his seat at the table.

Notwithstanding the entreaties of his friends, Schuermans persisted in remaining with them, in order, he said, to become better acquainted with Ludovic. He thought it impossible he could be of a malicious character, for his countenance expressed neither anger nor resentment.

“Fill your bowls,” said Godmaert, “and give me your attention whilst I explain to you the reason for which I assembled you to-night.

“You know well the violence and injustice we daily endure at the hands of the Spanish tyrant and his satraps; you are aware that they derisively call the nobles of our country, Gueux; that they remove

them from all public offices, that they may have more liberty to oppress our unhappy brethren. They know that we are impatient under the galling yoke, and that the desire of vengeance has taken root in our hearts; they dread an insurrection which would snatch the Low Countries from their grasp. On this account, in defiance of the privileges guaranteed to us, they have overrun the land with Spanish soldiery; they desire to remind us that we are slaves in a vast prison. Gallows and scaffolds are erected in every city; the sword of the executioner nightly performs its bloody work. Yes, my friends, let your tears flow! Never more will you behold Zierinck nor Van Bercheur. Last evening they were torn from their homes, and before midnight their heads had rolled upon the scaffold. This secret and infamous execution took place in the *Eckhof*."

A murmur of disapprobation interrupted Godmaert; he himself became red with anger as he revealed this odious deed. He continued:

"But let the tyrants beware! The Belgian lion will one day gnaw the links of the chain which now bind him, and when that day comes, the Scheldt will toss upon its waves the bodies of the Spaniards by thousands. But in order to hasten the happy moment which will restore us to freedom, we must at once mature our plans. Ludovic, listen to me; what I am about to say concerns yourself alone. When a villain, who has been exalted and made powerful by destiny, persecutes the good who are weak, have not the latter the right to combat against the unjust oppression of their enemy, even if it be necessary to employ artifice and treachery?"

“No,” replied Ludovic; “a recourse to treachery and perjury is inexcusable under any circumstances. I learned this lesson from your own lips.”

“I know it, Ludovic; but understand that we can attain our object only by artifice. Did we all entertain the same opinions upon this subject as you do, we would soon be effaced from the list of nations. We must meet violence by craft; we must resort to any measures which may check our oppressors in the work of persecution. And can you believe, Ludovic, that they have not deserved death? They have deprived us of liberty and reduced us to a state of bondage. They have put our brethren to death with impunity; and we—we of the old heroic race of Ambiorix—leave our poniards rusting in the scabbard. Shall we sit with folded arms and see the blood of our friends flowing around us? Shall our vengeance consist in expressions of hatred? No; notwithstanding my old age, the blood flows warm in my veins, and I am ready to shed every drop of it in the service of my country. I wish to witness the death of the last Spaniard whose foot treads our soil.”

So great was his anger and his desire of vengeance, that for a few moments he was deprived of the power of speech.

“Know also,” he resumed, “that King Philip II. has disdainfully rejected the petition of his subjects of the Low Countries. The Prince of Orange, the Counts d’Egmont and de Horn invite the Gueux of Antwerp to assemble as many men as possible, in view of the great revolution which will soon take place. Then we will show our oppressors that we are not

degenerate sons of noble sires, and that we, too, will not bear the yoke of the foreigner."

The white-haired orator was silent. All present had listened to him with the deepest attention; but, when he concluded his vehement exhortation, they were loud in their expressions of hatred, and vowed vengeance against Spain. Although Ludovic was impressed by the words of Godmaert, he did not speak. He hesitated; he reflected on what he had heard. The old woman was asleep in a corner. The excitable Schuermans had almost forgotten his wound, and drank with his companions to the future liberty of his country and the extermination of the Spaniard.

In the meantime, Godmaert drew Ludovic aside, and strove to make him adopt his own ideas. It was no easy task; for, after a half-hour's conversation, Ludovic said:

"Well, Godmaert, I rely upon your paternal solicitude; since you wish it, I will take the oath."

The crucifix was placed upon the table. Godmaert, reverently uncovering his head, said to Ludovic, in a solemn manner: "Young man, do you swear, by the holy Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, to aid your brethren on all occasions, to labor unceasingly for the expulsion of our common enemy, and to obey the chief whom you have helped to elect? As to your religion, have no anxiety; we are now, and we will always be, faithful to the Church of our fathers."

Ludovic raised his right hand:

"I swear it before God and by my honor!" he said.

Then all drank to his health, and Schuermans took his hand in a friendly manner.

“Gentlemen,” said Godmaert, “time presses; day is dawning in the east. Therefore, I must communicate to you in a few words what remains to be said. Not far from the village of Zoersel lives Wolfangh, who, at the head of a band of twenty robbers, has hitherto escaped the gallows, although he attacks both Belgians and Spaniards. By order of the Prince of Orange, I must endeavor to gain this man either by money or by promises. We are publicly known as Gueux, consequently this mission could not be performed secretly by us. I command Ludovic, in virtue of his oath, to go alone to Wolfangh.”

“It is hard,” replied Ludovic, “to share with robbers and villains the honor of freeing our country; but, as I am bound by my oath, I will obey your orders.”

“To-morrow,” resumed Godmaert, “you will receive written instructions, to which you will loyally conform. At present, I have nothing else to say, except to caution you to observe secrecy as to all that has passed here. I have gained my object. Ludovic, Gertrude invites you to dinner to-morrow.”

Saying these words, he threw his cloak around him and withdrew. Ludovic’s eyes sparkled with joy. The name of his beloved Gertrude had put to flight the sad thoughts which filled his mind. He took leave with a light heart of the assembled Gueux.

Conrad and Van der Voort took charge of Schuermans, and, as the door closed after them, the house became profoundly still.

CHAPTER II.

THE INTERVIEW WITH VALDÈS.

AT the period when these events occurred, there stood in Emperor Street an edifice much higher than the buildings which surrounded it. It was entered by a large door, beautifully sculptured. The many windows which looked upon the street were protected by massive iron bars,—a precaution very necessary in those times of trouble and disorder; for the number of robbers and brigands had wonderfully increased; and so rarely were the laws enforced, that deeds of violence were committed with impunity at noonday. This building, which resembled a prison rather than the palace of a nobleman, was the residence of Godmaert.

He was seated in his study, his head resting on his hand, reflecting upon state affairs, when the door of the apartment was gently opened and a monk entered. He was a man of about seventy years of age, of a lofty stature, which age had not bent; for he held himself erect, although his movements were tremulous. He threw back his cowl, and it would have been impossible to have looked upon his noble head without a feeling of veneration. His face, although wrinkled, was dignified and beautiful, and was expressive of goodness and tenderness; whilst one might read in his eye that his heart was sad.

On the arrival of the priest, Godmaert arose

quickly, advanced to meet him, and pressed his hand affectionately, saying:

“My good Father Francis, how shall I thank you for this visit?”

“My son,” replied the priest, “should I not labor, in these days of error and unbelief, to preserve your children from contagion? Hitherto their hearts have remained pure and pious. I would sin, did I not watch over them with additional solicitude, now that the demon makes use of the love of country to seduce souls.”

The priest seated himself, and continued:

“Godmaert, I have come to talk awhile with Ludovic and Gertrude. I am anxious about my beloved children.”

“Ludovic is not here, Father; but Gertrude is in the library, and she will be delighted to see you.”

“I will go to her, presently; but, Godmaert, my son, my friend, my brother, listen this once to my advice, and pardon the tears which flow for you.”

“Speak freely, Father; you know the value I place upon your words, and the affection I have ever borne you.”

The priest took Godmaert’s hand, and said, with emotion:

“I know it, my son. That you are misled, but not guilty, is a great consolation to me. But, Godmaert, Godmaert, the enemy of God triumphs in your country! Every day the air is filled with blasphemies hurled against the faith of our fathers; crowds of heretics, led by Satan, overrun the land, and lead astray our blinded countrymen. They have a watchword, a flag on which is inscribed: ‘Hatred

to Spaniards!’ Ah! no, no. You are deceived. It means, ‘Hatred to the ancient faith of the Belgians!’ It is not the throne of Philip II. they desire to overthrow; they wish to profane and destroy the altars of God. And to know that you, my son, my friend, you, whose soul is so magnanimous and loyal, that you, Godmaert, you combat under this standard! Oh! the thought overwhelms me with sorrow. I invoke heaven in the words of our dying Lord: ‘Forgive him, Father; for he knows not what he does!’ ”

Godmaert was deeply moved by the words of the priest, and he felt their truth; but he could not suddenly alter his plans, and he replied:

“I am aware, Father, that our country is filled with evil-minded people, foreigners, who have come among us to scatter the seeds of heresy; but I do not think that the revolution will assist the accomplishment of their designs.”

“Godmaert, remove the bandage from your eyes. Why have Tournay, Oudenarde, Lille, and Valenciennes been taken possession of by the Calvinists? Why has the doctrine of the Anabaptists spread like a devouring fire through Holland and Zealand? Why do Calvinists, Anabaptists, and Lutherans openly preach their errors at Antwerp? Shall I tell you? It is because you and other nobles, by your opposition to Spanish rule, have paralyzed the government. What will be the consequence? You will see the temples of God abandoned to the profanations of the wicked, who will mock at those things which you hold sacred. Do you not hear in the distance the roll of the thunder betokening the

storm which the fury of the Iconoclasts will cause to burst over us? Do you not see the dark cloud gathering in the horizon?"

Godmaert was much disturbed as the priest spoke, and his head sank upon his breast. After a moment's silence, he replied, sadly:

"Yes, I know and see with sorrow that we are working against our faith."

Joy illumined the face of the priest. He raised his eyes to heaven, and exclaimed:

"I thank Thee, O my God! for giving power to my words!"

Godmaert cast down his eyes, and moved convulsively, as if agitated by painful reflections. Suddenly he raised his head, and said, in a kind of frenzy:

"But, Father, must we then submit to the Spaniard? Am I not a soldier? Do I not belong to the Flemish nobility? No, no. I cannot endure their contempt, nor stifle in my soul the sentiment of honor. The Spaniards are too arrogant, too haughty! We must drive them away!"

The countenance of the priest resumed its sad expression, but he said, calmly:

"I know, my son, that the Belgians have many causes of discontent against the Spaniards; but shall worldly considerations be placed in the balance with your God? To the guilty desire of vengeance will you add contempt of the Creator? No, no; you are incapable of this. You will not force Father Francis to weep over the loss of the soul of his best friend."

"What would you have me do?" asked Godmaert, with emotion.

“Support the Spanish government, at least until the extinction of the heresy; induce your friends to do the same, and cause the laws to be respected at Antwerp.”

“I support the Spaniard? Never! That is impossible!”

“If you cannot obtain this victory over your pride of country, at least sheathe your sword, and do not give aid to the seditious.”

Godmaert did not reply for a few moments; then seizing the hand of the priest, he said:

“I am forced to tell you what you do not suspect. The revolution, the storm you dread, will burst forth in a few days, perhaps before the end of this week. Believe me, no human power can prevent it. The plans are matured: at the first signal from Brussels, the whole country will rise in mass against the Spaniards. I foresee, with you, the excesses which will be committed by the heretics. Your words made me tremble; but, Father Francis, do you think that I would do well to withdraw from the cause, I who am the chief of the Antwerp nobility? Can I not more efficaciously protect the religion of my fathers by my orders and arrangements, than by standing aloof and absenting myself?”

Tears shone in the eyes of the priest; he looked fixedly at Godmaert, as if stunned by the intelligence he had just received. At last he exclaimed:

“In a few days! Wilt Thou, so soon, O Lord, visit Thy Church? Shall I witness the profanation of Thy altars? Shall I hear Thy holy name blasphemed?”

Addressing Godmaert, he continued:

“I know not what to advise; the terrible news bewilders me. But I beg, I conjure you, Godmaert, protect the temples of God; have nothing to do with the heretics, unless to combat against them, and let not passion obscure your sense of duty. O Lord! Thy avenging arm presses heavily upon us.”

He bowed his head, overpowered by his emotions; but before Godmaert could reply, a young girl entered the room. Her face brightened with joy on seeing the priest. She approached him, and passing her hand under his arm attempted to raise him, saying gently:

“Come, Father Francis, Messire Ludovic de Halmale is in the library. I am so glad to find you here; do come!”

The priest gazed with paternal affection upon the young girl, and arose, supported by her; extending his hand to Godmaert, he said:

“I will go and console myself with my dear children. And do not you, my son, forget my words.”

Accompanied by the young girl, he left the room with tottering steps.

Godmaert seated himself, and said:

“Yes, my duty is to defend religion and protect the temples, but I will never uphold the Spaniards, nor will I spare them. No, no; I must be avenged. I must deliver my country; honor imperatively demands this of me: a soldier cannot permit himself to be insulted with impunity.”

His voice became lower; his lips still moved, but his words were unintelligible.

An hour later, he was summoned to dinner. He

arose, went to the dining-room, and took his seat at the head of the table.

Beside him sat his only and beloved daughter, Gertrude, the pearl of her sex. In no other woman could so many charms be found united. Never did painter imagine a lovelier face; and her noble, beautiful expression was equalled by her graceful, modest deportment.

A sweet smile lighted her countenance, and as her eyes fell upon a young man placed opposite to her, they betrayed the sentiments of her heart. This young man was her beloved Ludovic. Although he did not appear in the least morose, he preserved an entire silence. The presence of a guest at the table, whose stern eyes roused his fears, prevented him from enjoying a conversation as usual with Gertrude.

The visitor who watched the lovers with so harsh an expression was Valdès, a high-born Spanish noble, who possessed great influence with the government. He was always received cordially by Godmaert, because it was dangerous to incur his hatred. A velvet cloak, embroidered in gold, was thrown around his shoulders. The poniard suspended from his neck glittered with precious stones.

Valdès had expressed his love for Gertrude, but he had been politely rejected. For this reason, he observed the young man with suspicion and a malicious curiosity, endeavoring to comprehend his sentiments by the glances cast upon Gertrude.

Neither Ludovic nor Gertrude loved the Spaniards. Godmaert, from political motives, affected to love them. He was the first to break the silence by addressing Valdès, hoping to draw from him some information which might prove useful.

“Will the disturbances soon be appeased, Signor Valdès?” he said.

“I have heard nothing on the subject, Signor Godmaert, but were I in King Philip’s place, I would soon settle the rabble and the handful of rebel nobles who have joined them.”

“Do you think so, Valdès?” replied the Gueux, with a bitter smile. “Know you not that the Flemish people have never been subdued by violence? Let your king send his whole army into the Low Countries; let him slaughter, if he choose, all the inhabitants; and from their common sepulchre our country will send forth other opponents against her proud oppressors.”

“Godmaert, you do injustice to our nation. Why do you seek for pre-eminence over the Spanish nobility? Is not our king right to give the preference to his own people over foreigners?”

“In his own country, yes; in our country, no!”

“Poor as you are, of obscure race, devoid of glory, would you rashly presume to contend for precedence with an illustrious nation like Spain?”

The old Godmaert, who was unprepared for such language from his guest, could not, in spite of powerful diplomatic motives, restrain his emotion; his blood boiled, and his eyes flashed with indignation.

The Spaniard, who was designedly irritating the old Fleming, continued with affected moderation:

“Do you not think, Godmaert, that all those disturbers of the peace, those nobles who assume the title of Gueux, would do better to serve Spain, than thus to seek to stir up the scum of the people?”

“Valdès,” replied Godmaert, infuriated, “you for-

get that I am a Belgian. Do you mean to insult me in my own house? If so, speak out plainly."

"You misunderstand me, noble Godmaert," replied the artful Spaniard. "I except you and a few others; and yet even among these, there are some who, but for the favor of the king, would be as poor as their brethren."

"You say that we are poor, Valdès? Had we, like you, drained to the last drop the blood of the people of the New World, we too would be rich. If we demand equality with the Spanish lords, is not our claim just, since we are in our own country? Events may prove that we do not consider the foreigners our masters; we will then see if they have the courage they boast of in their pride and arrogance."

The Spaniard smiled contemptuously, and seemed to derive pleasure from the old man's wrath.

Ludovic trembled with rage. He had several times seized convulsively the hilt of his rapier, but an imploring glance from Gertrude had caused him to spare the insolent Spaniard.

Dinner was over.

"Gertrude," said Godmaert, turning towards his daughter, "go to the library with Ludovic."

He remained alone with his enemy.

The library was a vast hall resembling the nave of a church. A few folio volumes scattered around had obtained for it its name. It would have been more appropriately called an armory, for several cuirasses, swords, coats of mail, and other implements of war, hung against the bare walls. Some paintings of Frans, Floris, Hugo, Van Hort, Grimer, and other masters adorned one side of the apartment.

The stained-glass windows prevented the bright rays of the sun from penetrating, so that even at mid-day there was a soft, dim light. In one corner was an oratory, on which stood an ebony crucifix and an image of the Blessed Virgin; before it was a prie-Dieu, the spot from which many pure and fervent prayers had ascended from Gertrude's heart to the throne of God.

The lovers entered this hall in silence.

"Ludovic, Ludovic," suddenly exclaimed the young girl, bursting into tears; "I can no longer bear the insults offered to my gray-headed father. Their outrages are shortening his life. How often we have wept together—"

Her tears choked her utterance. She answered Ludovic's words of consolation only by convulsive sobs.

"Gertrude," he said, imploringly, "compose yourself. Bear with patience and resignation the sorrows which God sends us as trials. Think how much I suffer; I who am a noble."

And he sighed heavily, while an impotent anger crimsoned his cheeks.

Gertrude was not soothed by his words; on the contrary, her usually gentle expression was replaced by one of severity. She exclaimed, in a voice interrupted by sobs:

"Did you not see with what infernal delight the detestable Spaniard inflicted suffering upon my father? Do you not see that these daily insults are killing him? And there is no one, alas! no one to protect him!"

At these words the whole bearing of the young

noble underwent a complete change; he raised his head proudly, his eyes flashed, and the rage and despair of his heart were depicted upon his countenance.

Falling at Gertrude's feet, he exclaimed, impetuously: "You shall no longer accuse me of cowardice. What shall I do? I am ready to pass my sword through the body of the base Valdès, and tear thence his vile heart!"

A cry of agony escaped the young girl. She recoiled in affright, and pushed Ludovic from her as if his words had filled her with horror. She now saw the effect of her passionate exclamation, and her soul was filled with sorrow.

The young man understood her feeling; calming his emotion, he approached Gertrude, took her hand, and said, tenderly:

"Gertrude, we are both talking wildly."

The young girl, overpowered by the violence of her emotion, let her head fall on Ludovic's shoulder and wept bitterly. At last, rousing herself as from a painful dream, she arose, knelt upon the prie-Dieu, and lifting her soul upon the wings of prayer, she implored of heaven a consolation she could not find in the company of her betrothed.

Ludovic contemplated Gertrude with a kind of ecstasy, and he listened reverentially to her sweet voice as she murmured her fervent prayer. The name of her old father was frequently repeated. Long did she remain bowed in heavenly contemplation, until at last the young man, yielding to the powerful influence of her example, knelt on the floor behind her, and he, too, prayed for the country of his beloved Gertrude.

Rising from her prayer after awhile, she looked around for Ludovic, and extended her hand to him.

“My friend,” she said, “do you not find that prayer is a heavenly balm?”

Ludovic, surprised by Gertrude’s change of manner and expression, could but gaze upon her in silent admiration. At last, seating himself by her side, he exclaimed:

“Gertrude, my beloved, how beautiful and pure is your soul! Your prayers will certainly draw down upon us the benedictions of heaven.”

“I hope, Ludovic, that the cup of sorrow will soon be withdrawn from my father, and then —”

“And then,” continued the young man, “the priest will bless our union, and together we will, by our love and care, prolong the days of our father.”

A modest blush colored the cheeks of the young girl, and she cast down her eyes. In order to change the conversation, she said:

“Is it true, Ludovic, that religion has part in the revolt against Spain? What a terrible picture Father Francis presented to us! He, who is goodness itself, wept in speaking of it.”

“The holy old man is not mistaken in his forebodings. You never leave your residence, and therefore you are ignorant of the condition of affairs in our city. It is hazardous to acknowledge oneself a member of the true Church. The heretics have everywhere the ascendancy; they preach openly against the faith; they blaspheme God; they mock the Mother of God. Yesterday, Father Francis, whose age and venerable appearance would awe even savages, was insulted and hissed in the public street.”

Gertrude turned pale, and, raising her eyes to heaven, she exclaimed:

“O, my God! preserve him from harm!”

Ludovic resumed:

“And this vile rabble, the scum of other lands, collect here in our cities, and the cry, ‘Long live the Gueux!’ is forever on their lips. You have no idea how odious the words sound when uttered by them.”

He added, in a kind of despair:

“Gertrude, I am a Gueux.”

The young girl gazed upon him with ineffable tenderness.

“I know it, Ludovic; you obeyed the will of my father. He has suffered so much from the oppressors of our native land, that he considers it a duty to liberate the country from their rule. Let us respect a sentiment, the justice of which we neither can nor ought to judge.”

“What wisdom is in your words, dear Gertrude! Yes, I will obey the commands of Godmaert; it is my duty.”

“Ludovic, you know that I lamented, with Father Francis, the perils threatening the faith; but destiny weighs too heavily upon us; and when I reflect upon the humiliation and outrages heaped upon my father by the Spaniards, I can but advise you to do his bidding without mistrust. I believe that when the decisive moment comes, many frightful crimes will be committed against our holy religion; but since there is no help for it, we must leave these poor misguided people to themselves, and we, the children of the true Church, will afterwards restore her to more than her former splendor. Promise me, Ludovic,

that you will never adopt the opinions of the Iconoclasts."

"I promise it in the presence of God," he said, solemnly.

Gertrude resumed:

"We cannot prevent the people from committing crimes. Let us encourage the hope that they will cease to do evil when the excitement of passion passes away. I doubt not—" She was interrupted by the voice of her father ringing in thunder tones through the hall.

"Spanish dog!" cried Godmaert; "away with you at once! and never again, vile serpent, dare to cross the threshold of my door!"

"Miserable Gueux," replied Valdès. "I know not what restrains me from treating you as I would an insolent varlet."

Godmaert roared with anger, but powerful motives restrained him from avenging the insult offered him.

Ludovic drew his sword and sprang to the door. Gertrude caught his arm.

"Ludovic, what are you going to do?"

"Plunge my sword in the heart of the accursed Spaniard," he exclaimed, releasing himself from Gertrude's grasp and rushing from the library. Gertrude followed, but endeavored in vain to overtake him.

With a hand doubly strengthened by love and hatred, he clasped the throat of the Spaniard so tightly that his tongue protruded from his mouth.

"Cowardly insulter of a defenceless old man!" he exclaimed, hurling Valdès to the ground; "give up

your miserable soul to God; your last hour has come."

And he tightened his grasp upon his enemy's throat until he left him lying inanimate upon the floor.

Godmaert, overpowered by rage and terror, fell fainting upon an arm-chair. His daughter threw herself weeping at his feet, calling him by every endearing name, as if he could hear her voice. She passed her fingers through the silver locks of the old man, and sought by her burning kisses to bring back warmth to his cheeks. Suddenly she turned her head, and saw Ludovic with his arm raised and about to thrust his sword into the breast of the Spaniard, who had given signs of life. She left her father, and, rushing to Ludovic, drew him so violently by the doublet that she succeeded in arresting the blow. She implored him not to make himself guilty of murder; but he thought only of satisfying his vengeance, and made every effort to shake off his betrothed, who clung to him with the energy of despair.

"Ludovic," she exclaimed, pointing to the inanimate form of her father, "behold the victim of your fury!"

The young noble dropped his sword and left his enemy, in order to assist Godmaert. He took the chair in which the old man lay in his powerful arms, and carried both into another apartment. Aided by Gertrude, he succeeded in restoring him to consciousness.

"Where is he?" asked the father in a feeble voice.

“He is stretched upon the ground,” replied Ludovic. “I regret having left him alive.”

Godmaert would perhaps have pronounced words of pardon, but his daughter’s embraces prevented him from speaking.

“Ah! my beloved father,” she cried, “God has heard my prayer; you live!” and, overcome by the violent emotions she had endured, she fainted in her father’s arms.

At that moment the door of the room opened, and the Spaniard, boiling with rage, entered.

“There! there! Ludovic,” exclaimed Godmaert, pointing to a drawn sword; “defend your betrothed against that assassin!”

Ludovic seized the sword, and placed himself before Gertrude.

“Will you again insult an old man?” he cried out to Valdès.

“No, Flemish traitors,” replied the Spaniard. “I thus punish all for your audacity,” and he made a thrust with his sword at the young man; but Ludovic, who was very skilful in the management of arms, warded off the blows of his adversary.

The old Godmaert pressed his daughter to his heart with anxious solicitude, and encouraged Ludovic not to yield. But Ludovic needed no urging, for he had already wounded the Spaniard, who rushed from the room blaspheming. Ludovic shut the heavy door in his face, and left him to vent his fury in the hall undisturbed.

“Villains!” cried the infuriated Spaniard; “you shall soon have cause to repent of your insolence. The old Gueux shall change this habitation for a

prison. I would sacrifice my name and honor, if necessary, to deliver him into the hands of the executioner." He continued to utter menaces and threats; but neither Godmaert nor Ludovic paid any attention to them; they were absorbed by their efforts to restore Gertrude to consciousness. At last Valdès withdrew, and went elsewhere to meditate upon the vengeance to which he had bound himself by oath.

Gertrude, opening her eyes, found herself seated between her father and Ludovic. The emotions of the three had been so intense that neither spoke for some time. Godmaert first broke the silence by saying:

"You see well, that the moment has arrived to shake off the yoke now weighing upon us. As for myself, I shall devote, if necessary, all I possess to the cause. Gertrude, I give you to Ludovic, and when united to him, you will place but little value upon the fortune I might leave you. But remember what I have told you: I wish no Spaniard to witness your marriage. And you, Ludovic, shall not call Gertrude yours until we have become free like our fathers. In order to hasten the hour of your happiness and our deliverance, go seek Wolfangh early to-morrow morning. I regret that circumstances oblige us to make use of this brigand, but necessity is an implacable law. If crimes be committed, posterity will absolve us in consideration of the hatred and resentment inspired by the odious despotism of Spain. And, Gertrude, should you see the image of your God dying upon the cross trampled under foot, do not accuse your father of impiety.

You know how carefully I have educated you in those sentiments of piety which are the anchor of our salvation —”

“Oh! yes, yes, father,” exclaimed Gertrude, interrupting him; “I know that you revere the saints reigning in heaven, and that you invoke their intercession.”

Godmaert took Ludovic aside, and after informing him how to discover the retreat of Wolfangh, he handed him a sealed letter, instructing him to place it in the hands of the brigand chief. He advised him to withdraw at once and make preparations for his journey, whilst he and Gertrude would seek the repose so necessary after the trial of the day.

Ludovic bade adieu to his beloved Gertrude and her father, who soon forgot in sleep the sufferings they had just endured.

CHAPTER III.

LUISBEKELAER.

THE sun had arisen majestically, and its rays, falling through the window into Ludovic's room, roused him from an unquiet, disturbed sleep. He sprang up, dressed hastily, prostrated himself for a moment in prayer, girded on his sword, mounted his horse, and traversed the streets which conducted to the gate of *Kipdorf*.

He was surprised to see a number of armed men taking the same route as himself. Very many cava-

liers passed him, and the streets echoed to the tread of horses. Women and children followed in crowds, but more slowly.

Ludovic, who could not comprehend the cause of this early walk, approached one of the horsemen, armed like the others with dagger and musket, and demanded wherefore all these people were going in the one direction, and were apparently setting out for war so calmly and cheerfully.

“Do you not know, Messire Ludovic,” replied the cavalier, recognizing him, “that there is to be an extraordinary service to-day at Borgerhout?”

“But why are you armed?”

“Do you think, Messire, that we would venture to go unarmed?” replied the Gueux, laughing. “Were we to do so, the Spaniards would not hesitate to massacre the whole of us in the public square; but, if they see we are in a condition to defend ourselves, the cowardly race would not dare approach us.”

“O, my God!” said the young man, “would that these teachers of new doctrines would quit our country! Messire Schuermans,” he added, “I am pleased to see that the consequences of your wound were not serious, since you are able to mount your horse.”

“You are mistaken, Messire; I still require aid to seat myself in the saddle, and sometimes the pain is acute; but I do not mind it.”

He laughed heartily.

“A little more, Ludovic, and you would have taken my life; but this is nothing — only a slight flesh-wound.”

“You pardon me, I hope, Schuermans.

“Undoubtedly; and I must ask forgiveness of you for my silly words.”

He took the young man's hand, pressed it cordially, and said, expressively:

“A Fleming nourishes hatred and rancor only against a foreigner. We are the best and dearest friends.”

They continued to converse as they rode along. Sometimes they were separated by the crowd, but they would meet again, and resume the conversation which had been interrupted. Occasionally an imprudent passer would exclaim: “Long live the Gueux!” but he was soon lost amid the multitude. Our two cavaliers at last reached the gate of Borgerhout.

“Dismount here, Messire Ludovic,” said Schuermans, “and taste some of the best beer which is brewed at Antwerp.”

He pointed to a sign on which was artistically painted a certain animal, beneath which was the following inscription:

At the sign of the Hog is found good cheer,—
Brandy, wine, ale, and the best Mechlin beer.

“Alight, Ludovic; you will find here the wooden bowls of the Gueux. Come, mine host, and aid me to dismount. Is the Mechlin beer good?”

“One should not praise himself,” replied the host, as he assisted Schuermans from his horse; “the excellent drink I will place before you must be its own recommendation.”

A servant led away the two horses, and the Gueux entered the inn. After having emptied their first

glass, and talked some time upon the present condition of public affairs, they remarked a middle-aged man, whose hair was just beginning to turn gray, regarding them with an expression of anxiety.

The attire of this individual was not rich, but it was clean and genteel. His wrinkled brow and melancholy air gave evidence that the man, oppressed by trials and misfortunes, had grown old before his time. Tears were in his eyes, and his head seemed bowed by care. Schuermans, who had a good heart, could not quietly endure this. He approached the man, took his hand, and asked him the cause of his sorrow.

“Messire,” replied the old man, sadly, “your words have been as so many daggers piercing my heart.”

“Who are you?” said Schuermans.

“My name is Louis van Hort.”

The two Gueux removed their caps respectfully, and said:

“Hail to the great painter! Honor to Van Hort, our fellow-citizen.”

The sorrowful artist appeared to appreciate these marks of deference, and smiled sadly.

Ludovic joined them, and asked seriously why he was so afflicted.

“You know not,” he answered, “with what tenderness an artist loves his works. The father who sees his child exposed to an inevitable misfortune, weeps over his offspring; and I lament the fate awaiting the paintings which have made our city celebrated throughout the world.”

The two Gueux looked at each other in surprise. A moment before, his countenance was inanimate

and dejected ; now, it was lighted by a noble, intellectual expression, and his eyes shone with the fire of genius.

“My heart,” he continued, “was inflamed with the love of the art. I have passed my life in continued agitation ; although I am still young, my hair has grown gray, and my brow is wrinkled — and why ? because, as God gave His life for His creatures, I have worn out my existence in order to animate the creations of my pencil.”

“I think you have cause to fear,” replied Schuermans. “The day upon which our country will be rescued from its thralldom, will witness the destruction of many statues and many pictures.”

“Yes,” resumed the painter ; “they will remove my paintings from the temple of God ; they will, in their fury, tear to pieces the works by which I hoped to obtain immortality ; they will efface from the memory of man my name, and the names of that Pleiades of great masters whom our country has produced ; and strangers, contemplating the desecrated walls of our churches, will weep over the ruins of the masterpieces which adorned them ; and they will bear away with them the shreds which remain, as relics of the art.”

Ludovic gazed entranced upon the great artist. Never had he beheld in human eye so noble an expression. Deeply interested by the impassioned words of the painter, he strove to restore him to calmness by urging motives for hope ; but Van Hort appeared convinced of the immediate destruction of the paintings.

He continued :

“In the church of Our Lady is one of my pictures. I worked on it for a year with ardent devotion; forgetful of all the world beside, I lived with it alone, absorbed by the sentiment of my art; a slow fever consumed me; I shortened my life by my labor; and, like the Greek artist, I knelt and prayed before the creation of my hands.”

A deep sigh stopped his utterance.

“Oh!” he continued, “I am disturbed only on account of this one picture; and I have implored permission to remove it to a place of safety; but the people with whom I had to deal refused me, — they say I sold it to them! Sold! yes, I sold it! Want obliged me to it; otherwise, my Christ would never have left my workshop.”

Schuermans and Ludovic assured him that, were it in their power to save his painting, no harm should come to it.

“Neither my strength nor my courage will fail me,” replied Van Hort, “to protect or avenge my work. I have foreseen all. On the day of the devastation, armed with musket and dagger, I will defend my Christ; and if, touched by impious hands, it falls from the wall, I will water it with my blood offered in holocaust to art and God. I will not survive my beloved painting.”

“What matters it,” said the host, interrupting him, “if these pictures should be destroyed? As long as a house is left standing in Antwerp, an artist will dwell there.”

“Who speaks to you?” said Van Hort. “What do you know or understand of such things? But a little while ago, you were lamenting with me the

danger threatening the treasures of art possessed by our city ; and now this is of no consequence, because some of the Gueux are your guests. You know but one God, the God of gold ; but one art, that of making money.”

He took his cap, saluted the Gueux, and left the house where he had just wept so bitterly over the destruction which menaced the masterpieces of art.

“The fellow is silly !” said the host, querulously.

Ludovic and his companion mounted their horses and made their way through the crowd to the gate of *Kipdorf*. They quickened their pace and traversed the suburb of *Borgerhout*, and at last arrived at the spot where the sermon was to be delivered.

The place was called at that time *Luisbekelaer*. It was an extensive piece of ground in the form of a triangle, the principal side of which was bordered by the stream of the *Hérenthels*. Over this space thousands of people were dispersed. All the men were armed. A large number were extended on the banks of the stream, warming themselves in the rays of the morning sun ; others, on horseback, rode slowly across the wide plain. Towards the centre, a considerable group was formed of people chanting psalms. Most of the men carried the wooden bowl of the Gueux ; and many wore suspended around their necks, as a rallying sign, the golden medal and wallet.

Schuermans recognized among them several friends. When the hymn was finished, he advanced cheerfully to salute them.

“All goes well !” whispered Van der Voort to him. “They have published an edict forbidding

men to go armed to the sermon; and the people, formally disregarding this decree, have come in larger numbers and better armed than usual, and have forced the guards to permit it without interfering."

"Let the Spaniards alone," replied Schuermans; "they are preparing their own ruin."

Herman Stujek, the preacher, ascended an eminence formed of earth and covered with planks; muskets were fired as a signal for the multitude to keep silence. At the same moment, different preachers, at various stations of the Luisbekelaer, began to announce the new doctrines.

The vast crowd remained profoundly silent, eager to hear that new doctrine which was opposed to their enemies — the Spaniards.

The sermons were all anti-Catholic; for all who addressed the multitude endeavored to incite their audience to destroy the images and devastate the churches. The people listened with curiosity; not a voice was raised amid this ocean of heads to interrupt the speakers.

Having listened for a time with extreme sorrow to their pernicious doctrine, Ludovic silently pressed the hand of Schuermans, and directed his horse towards the high road. He found there a dozen cavaliers armed with muskets, who were instructed to keep at a distance any one who seemed disposed to disturb the assembly. They permitted the young man to pass unchallenged, and Ludovic soon reached the road which was to conduct him to the end of his journey.

He pursued it thoughtfully; his mind now revert-

ing to Gertrude, now to her father, the noble old Fleming, and then again to the illustrious painter, Van Hort. Suddenly his face became clouded, and, in his preoccupation, the bridle escaped from his hands. His excited imagination conjured up before him a thousand horrible scenes. Vividly to his mind's eye arose the sight of multitudes of men destroying each other; among them he recognized friends and acquaintances; he saw also the preachers of the Luisbekelaer. Torrents of blood flowed; the way was strewn with bodies of the dead; the air was filled with cries of agony. Soon, amid this sea of blood, arose before the young man a majestic temple. Many priests knelt with uplifted hands before the altar. Suddenly, the crowd rushed into the temple like wild beasts; they tore the Lord's anointed from the altar by their white hair, and dragged them over the marble pavement, whilst they blasphemed the name of God. Afterwards, he beheld the altar defiled with filth; he witnessed a frightful profanation; he closed his eyes to shut out the horrible scene. Soon the voice of God resounded through the edifice like thunder; His malediction and His avenging thunderbolts fell upon the desecraters; the walls of the temple crumbled; the earth opened, and from the depths of a sea of fire arose piercing lamentations to the ears of Ludovic, who was startled from his reverie into consciousness; but so vivid was the picture portrayed by his forebodings, that its very remembrance made him shudder.

In about three hours he would attain the end of his journey; but noticing that the atmosphere was loaded with heavy vapors, and that dark clouds were

slowly gathering above his head, he put spurs to his horse, with the hope of being able to accomplish his mission before the storm, which threatened to be severe, should burst upon him.

He had passed the village of Schilde, and reached the outside of Zoersel, when the lightning flashed vividly, and was immediately followed by loud peals of thunder. The rain commenced to pour in torrents, and it was driven by a strong wind obliquely against the rider; the road became almost impassable; and the horse, terrified by the uninterrupted play of lightning, could with difficulty be managed. At that moment, Ludovic fortunately perceived at a short distance before him a cabin, towards which he rode rapidly.

“Who is there?” asked a tremulous voice.

“A traveller, who begs a shelter from the storm,” replied Ludovic.

Hearing the gentle tones of the young man, the inhabitants of the cabin took courage, and opened the door.

“You are welcome, Messire,” said a man whose form was bent by hard labor; “enter.”

Ludovic gave his horse to the laborer to be cared for, and he entered the humble abode.

The mother with her four children were kneeling in prayer before a statue of the Blessed Virgin.

“If the Iconoclasts could see the sweet consolation these poor people find in this statue, they would not persist in their designs,” thought Ludovic.

The laborer having attended to the horse, returned to his guest.

“The weather is detestable, Messire,” he said, politely.

“Yes,” replied the young man; “I am fortunate in meeting so cordial a reception under your roof.”

In the meanwhile, the man had placed upon the table some bread and butter.

“Messire,” he said, “that is all we have to put before you; if you will partake of it, it is offered cheerfully.”

“I thank you for your kindness, and I will do credit to your repast by my good appetite.”

Whilst he partook of the humble fare, the weather commenced to clear; the thunder rolled in the distance, although the rain still fell heavily. The woman had stirred the fire, and hung Ludovic’s cloak before it to dry. The children ran about the room like young kids, and by degrees approached Ludovic, pointing out to each other the gold embroidery on his dress. At last they became so friendly that they seated themselves on his knees. The good woman, fearing they would annoy him, wished to remove them, but he insisted that she would let them alone.

“This gentleman loves little children,” she whispered to her husband, and her eyes shone with maternal pride. She was happy to see her offspring petted and caressed by so good a gentleman.

“Your poverty,” said Ludovic, “is a blessing. I assure you, that in the great world of which you know nothing, no joys are found as pure as those you possess in this cabin.”

“It is true,” said the laborer, “God has not bestowed peace of soul only on the rich; we also are happy.”

And contemplating his children, he added, with a sigh:

“But, Messire, reflect upon the sorrow I experience when I think of my inability to leave to my children the most trifling amount to preserve them from want. This is a daily trouble of which you are wholly ignorant.”

“True,” said Ludovic; “what would become of these children, should you be taken from them?”

“My father,” said the laborer, “constructed a cabin in the forest; by hard and continuous labor, he rendered fertile a small piece of land; after his death my elder brother inherited it. I, with my wife, who was as poor as myself, succeeded by assiduous efforts in building the cabin in which you now are; we imitated the birds of the air which build nests for their young. By the blessing of heaven, we have lived in peace by the sweat of our brow. But should it please God to call us to himself whilst our children are young, before they have strength to earn a livelihood for themselves, they will be forced to live upon charity.”

The poor man seemed overpowered by these sad reflections. A strange joy shone in Ludovic's eyes; without making any reply to the anxious father, he left the cabin for the purpose of seeking his horse; a few moments afterwards he rejoined the family.

“I desire,” he said to the father, whilst he opened a purse which he held in his hand, “to reward you for the cordial reception you gave me, and for the love you testify for your children.”

He placed upon the table four piles of gold, each containing ten pieces.

“Here are,” he continued, “ten pieces of gold for each of your children. Use them for their advan-

tage, and may God long preserve you to watch over them !”

Stupefied by the generous act, the good people found no words to express their gratitude. They regarded each other in astonishment, whilst tears flowed down their cheeks.

At last the father exclaimed fervently :

“ May God shower down upon you and all whom you love the benedictions he has promised to the merciful !”

The woman knelt before Ludovic. She pointed to the image of the Virgin, saying, with emotion :

“ I will never cease to pray for the benefactor of my children, who has been to us an angel of consolation.”

She caught Ludovic's hand and watered it with her tears. He in vain endeavored to calm her.

“ Oh ! Messire,” she said, sobbing, “ my heart is too full of gratitude. Let me thank you for my children. Do not withdraw your hand : God will place to your account all you have done for us ;” and she continued to weep.

Ludovic, desirous of putting an end to these demonstrations of gratitude, asked the man :

“ Can you tell me where lies the forest of Zoersel ? ”

“ The forest of Zoersel ! ” exclaimed the man, terrified. “ Have you any intention of going there ? ”

“ I must be there this very day.”

The peasant placed his hand upon the young man's shoulder, and said, solemnly :

“ Messire, death awaits you in the forest of Zoersel.”

“Why so?” demanded Ludovic.

“How fortunate you mentioned your design to me! I can now save my benefactor from certain destruction. Do you know that Wolfangh, a brigand and an assassin, dwells in that forest? Do you know that no man has ever penetrated it without paying for his temerity with his life? Day before yesterday, a traveller, brave and noble like yourself, was found lying at the entrance of the woods. His body was pierced by twenty dagger wounds. Grant me one favour: return whither you came, unless you wish us to deplore your death.”

“Whatever danger I may encounter,” replied Ludovic, “I must meet this terrible Wolfangh, and have a conversation with him. Nothing could induce me to abandon my intention.”

“I pity you, Messire,” said the laborer, sadly. “However, I am pleased to have an opportunity to testify my gratitude. I will accompany you, even against your will.”

“No, no,” said Ludovic, interrupting him; “I will not permit it. If there be peril, I will meet it alone. Your children need their father, and I have neither wife nor children.”

“No, Messire; I will not obey you.”

The mother listened anxiously to this discussion, and encouraged her husband to disregard the opposition of the young man.

“Go with him,” she said; “shield our benefactor from harm. I would not otherwise have a moment’s repose.”

She approached the image of the Blessed Virgin.

“Go,” she said, “go! I will remain in prayer for both of you.”

Ludovic found it was useless to make further resistance.

“Since you persist,” he said, “follow me. I hope, by the blessing of God, to return to take another meal under your hospitable roof.”

The horse was brought to the door, and Ludovic, having bade adieu to the woman and her children, left the cabin in company with the laborer, in order to enter the forest of Zoersel and seek Wolfangh and his band.

CHAPTER IV.

WOLFANGH.

TO the left, Messire!” cried out the peasant, and Ludovic entered a wide road which appeared to traverse the forest. On either side was an impenetrable underwood, and lofty fir-trees intercepted the rays of the sun, which was now high above the horizon.

“Whither does this road lead?” asked Ludovic.

“A few years ago,” replied the laborer, “it was cut through the forest to facilitate the transportation of large trees; at present it is abandoned by the people, and only frequented by the brigands and other refugees from justice. During the recent period of storm and agitation very few ships have been constructed at the dock-yard of Antwerp, and consequently the demand for large trees has been small. It has resulted from this that robbers have

resorted hither without obstacle, as there was no regularly organized force in the neighboring villages, and the soldiers were unable to leave the cities, as there was constant danger of an outbreak."

Thus conversing, our travellers reached a thicket where the road was lost amid bushes and brambles; they noticed at that spot a stone cross.

"Why was this cross placed here?" asked Ludovic.

"In commemoration of a murder committed. If you approach the cross nearer, you can read upon it the name of the unfortunate man who lost his life at that place."

Ludovic read:

D. O. M.

HERE LIES

JOHN VAN HERCK,

CRUELLY ASSASSINATED

ON ST. GERTRUDE'S DAY,

A. D. MCXXI.

Pray for the repose of his soul.

The laborer uncovered his head and addressed to heaven a fervent prayer for the deceased, in which he was joined by Ludovic. The young man alighted from his horse and knelt piously before the cross. His thoughts, however, soon wandered to his beloved Gertrude, whose name, inscribed upon a cross recalling so bloody a deed, filled him with a vague anxiety.

He knelt some moments in entire forgetfulness of all around him, when, turning his head, he perceived between the coppice two villanous-looking faces,

and two muskets were pointed directly against his breast.

“Your money or your life!” exclaimed the two men, emerging from the thicket, prepared to take from the young noble whichever he chose to surrender.

“Here is my purse,” said Ludovic, taken by surprise.

Then he added :

“I am on my way to seek an interview with Wolfangh, and I will thank you to inform me where I can find him.”

“Lay down your arms!” said one of the brigands.

The young man threw his pistols and sword to some distance from him.

The other brigand, approaching him, said :

“What do you want with Wolfangh?”

“I have a letter to deliver to him,” replied Ludovic.

“Do you come from the city, and are you a Gueux?” demanded the brigand.

“I am a Gueux, and I must speak with Wolfangh before night.”

The brigand smiled.

“I know it,” he replied ; “my master was in town to-day, and learned your intended visit from another Gueux. He has been awaiting a young gentleman for the past two hours; and since you are the individual, you may resume your arms and follow us without fear into the interior of the forest.”

The peasant, who had watched with painful anxiety the event of the encounter, handed Ludovic his arms.

“I thank you,” said the young man, “for having accompanied me, and I beg you to return immediately to your wife and children, in order to relieve their anxiety; in a couple of hours I hope to see you again.”

He shook hands with the good man, who stood riveted to the spot, gazing after Ludovic until he disappeared in the thicket.

One of the brigands took charge of the horse and led him through by-paths. The other endeavored to be as polite as his rough nature permitted, and he strove to draw Ludovic into conversation; but he gave very short and abrupt answers to all the remarks made to him.

“Important events will soon transpire, I believe, Messire? The city is in a state of agitation, and we, too, will have our share in the spoils.”

“I know nothing of it,” said Ludovic.

“I know it,” resumed the brigand; “our chief tells us that our booty will be such that we can leave our present miserable trade, and in future live like lords.”

“Whence will you obtain this booty?” asked Ludovic, sadly.

“The church of Our Lady contains by itself treasure enough to enrich our whole band.”

Ludovic looked sternly at the brigand, and exclaimed, in an indignant manner:

“What! would you dare to pillage the temple of God?”

“We did not form the plan,” replied the brigand, quickly; “it is you who have put it in our power; and I am confident that the letter you bring con-

tains a promise to give us full liberty to pillage when the great day arrives."

Ludovic made no reply, but he heaved a deep sigh at the thought of the terrible woes which menaced his native city.

After having walked a half-hour through the trees and thickets, they at last reached the encampment of Wolfangh and his band.

It was an extensive glade surrounded on all sides by thick woods. The brigands had cut down the trees and levelled this tract of land, in order to make for themselves a comfortable retreat. In the centre of the glade arose a large cabin of wood and clay; five cabins of smaller size were scattered around, so as to leave a sort of square of unoccupied ground.

As soon as the young man entered this square, his guide took from his doublet a bone whistle, and thrice the forest echoed the shrill sound he drew from it. The signal was returned, and Ludovic was introduced into the camp. His guide left him in order, he said, to notify Wolfangh of his arrival.

The young man saw with horror the ferocious expression of the faces of the bandits who were scattered about the enclosure. Six of the most repulsive among them were collected around a large fire, over which was suspended a smoking caldron containing their evening repast. The light of the red flame falling on their cheeks gave them a most fantastic appearance, so that they resembled demons rather than human beings. At a little distance from these, others were casting dice to decide who should possess the money spread out before them. They did not

for a moment reflect that their stake was the price of human blood. They uttered oaths so frightful that Ludovic withdrew as far as possible that their words might not reach his ears. Others, seated upon the ground, polished their muskets or their daggers. By their side were large pitchers, from which they poured out the liquor without intermission. At Ludovic's arrival, they were singing in a harsh voice a popular song.

They were all swarthy, and their long hair hung uncombed upon their shoulders. Under other circumstances, their costume would have provoked a smile from Ludovic; for whilst most of them wore a new doublet of fine cloth, their other garments were soiled and tattered. Some wore coats embroidered in gold, over which was thrown a monk's coarse and much-worn cloak. Their arms alone were in good condition, and they shone like silver above their rags. In a word, they looked like a band of masqueraders. Two of them stood before the door of the large cabin; heavy halberds glistened in their hands under the rays of the setting sun. By order of Wolfangh, they requested Ludovic to go to their chief.

The place he entered was not, we may well suppose, richly furnished, but everything was extremely neat and clean. The walls were whitewashed and marbled with different colors; highly polished arms were suspended against them; a few chairs of some elegance were arranged around a table. At this table Wolfangh was seated. His dress was simple and appropriate, such as might be worn by a man who had never left the city. To judge by his

features, which were still fine, he could not be more than forty years of age. Black, sparkling eyes, a mouth expressive of hate and resentment, a cold and somewhat sad look, such were the marks by which a physiognomist might conjecture the character of the bandit.

As soon as he perceived Ludovic, he arose and bowed politely to his guest.

"You are welcome, Messire," he said, as he placed a chair for Ludovic and requested him to be seated.

"What news do you bring me?" he asked.

Ludovic handed him the letter without speaking.

Wolfangh broke the seal hurriedly, and having read the despatch, he sounded an ivory whistle, and two banditti entered. He spoke to them in a whisper; then added, aloud:

"At eleven o'clock!"

They brought wine and filled the cups.

"To the health of the Gueux, Messire!" said Wolfangh.

"To the health of the Gueux!" repeated Ludovic, hesitatingly. He put the cup to his lips, but did not drink the wine.

"Oh! Messire," exclaimed the bandit, much vexed, "my glass is empty. I beg you to pledge me. . . . Empty your glass, and after that do as you choose."

Ludovic drank the wine, but evidently against his will.

"I understand you, Messire," said Wolfangh. "A brigand is too despicable a man to be toasted. Yes, yes, I comprehend you."

A bitter smile flitted across his face, whilst he continued:

“Why do you ask my aid, since you despise me? You do not answer. But I know it; when the blow has been struck, we break the instrument which is no longer of use to us, and we cast it aside; is it not so, Messire?”

Ludovic contemplated the bandit with astonishment.

“Wolfangh,” he replied, “I am ignorant of the contents of the letter I presented to you; consequently, I am unable to answer your question. As for myself, I can say to you, that if you engage in the revolution, you will, without doubt, derive great personal advantage, if you wish it.”

“What advantage, Messire?”

“Pardon for the past, and the possibility of leading in future an honorable and peaceful life under the protection of the laws.”

A smile of satisfaction lighted up the countenance of Wolfangh, but this was soon succeeded by an expression of discouragement, and he said, shaking his head:

“To return, to return. . . . it is difficult! And yet I must. I can no longer resist the mysterious voice that calls me. Why did men reject me when I was innocent? Yes, Messire, there was a time in my life when I, too, was ashamed to drink with a robber.”

“That is probable,” replied the young man. “You must have had strong motives to turn you from the path of honor.”

“Yes; once I was young like you, full of hopes which pictured to me the path of life strewn with flowers; but the wickedness of men broke my heart.”

“Wolfangh, I see plainly that you were never

fitted for the life you lead. Your countenance does not indicate a cruel nature, and your language does not betray a savage ignorance. Nothing in you gives evidence of the abject being who would shed blood with cool deliberation. Return to human society, Wolfangh; your heart is still open to good impressions. Pass the remainder of your days in honest labor, and re-enter the path of virtue. Perhaps happiness and peace of soul may be the reward of your conversion. The mercy of God is infinite, and it is proportioned to the number of our sins and the sincerity of our repentance."

"Thank you, Messire, for your words of consolation; you have a great and noble heart. Had you addressed me with disdain and contempt, anger would have stifled in my heart the good thoughts with which I have been inspired; but you have pointed out to me the path to salvation presented by the approaching revolution. I assure you, solemnly, that your suggestions shall not be disregarded. The good seed has not fallen on stony ground."

Ludovic was touched by the robber's words and expression. "Wolfangh," he said, "great must have been your sorrows, when they drove such a soul as yours to a life of infamy."

"You are right, Messire. Were I to pour out my criminal soul into your noble heart, you would see that my youth was crushed by terrible misfortunes."

"Speak, Wolfangh; I shall listen to you with interest."

"When I relate the cause of my misfortunes, you will understand that there are catastrophes in human life from the fatal consequences of which it is im-

possible to escape. If in my narration you find traces of noble and pure sentiments, think not of what I am at the present moment, for circumstances have totally changed me. I lived in the village of Rethy. I was young, handsome, and well formed. None among my companions had a more beautiful voice. Do you suppose, Messire, that I took pleasure in the praises lavished upon me by my acquaintances? No: Helen's voice alone made me happy. From early childhood we had been attached to each other, and when I attained manhood, the affection which united me to her increased in intensity. Thus several peaceful and happy years passed in my native village. I awaited impatiently for the time to come when Helen would be eighteen years of age, for then, with her father's approbation, I was to lead her to the altar; but fate, whose inexorable decrees are not influenced by man's desires, had steeped my lips in the honey of the chalice, and left in the dregs the poison-gall which I was to drink to the last drop. A great lord of high position at the court of the Emperor Charles, went often to hunt at Postel. One day, by chance, he saw Helen, and he was struck by her enchanting beauty, her sweet and modest smile; and he determined, in spite of every obstacle, to induce her to leave her father's house and go with him. Failing in this, he had recourse to violence, and, watching his opportunity, he bore her away by force. One evening, I waited for Helen in vain. Her father was surprised at her absence. Midnight came, and still Helen did not return. For two weeks we made useless search and inquiries; no clue could be discovered to her mysterious disappearance. You can

imagine, Messire, better than I can describe, the despair of our hearts. Overpowered by grief, I wandered about almost frenzied."

"I pity you, Wolfangh," said Ludovic, "and I understand the extent of your sufferings."

"Messire," replied the bandit, "pray God that a like misfortune may never befall you. Under such a blow, you would gladly welcome death. But there was still another sorrow in store for me. Thirty days exactly had passed, leaving us in the same frightful uncertainty, when I was seated in the evening with the father of my beloved Helen. We were weeping and talking of her, when the door was thrown open with violence, and Helen herself rushed in and threw herself sobbing into the arms of her father. Having embraced him with an outpouring of filial affection, she threw herself upon her knees before him, and in broken sentences implored his pardon for the dishonor she had brought upon him. A furious jealousy dried the tears which had been flowing from my eyes.

"'Helen,' I exclaimed, severely; 'where have you been?'

"'Oh, Wolfangh,' she cried, 'leave me; your gaze terrifies me.'

"'Where have you been?' I repeated, in the same tone of voice.

"She pointed to the distance, saying at the same time:

"'I am forever lost to you!'

"I could no longer restrain my wrath. Believing that she had voluntarily abandoned me, I hurled at her every injurious epithet which suggested itself;

at each word I uttered, she shuddered with terror and shame. I would have continued giving vent to my rage, had not her father forced me to silence by drawing me towards the inanimate form of his daughter. What a sentiment of pity possessed my heart, when, on contemplating her more closely, I noticed her pale and emaciated cheeks and her sunken eyes — the proof of the suffering she had endured. Bitter was my remorse for my cruel invectives, and I implored Helen to pardon me; but she lay lifeless, insensible to my anguish. No torture could surpass the sufferings I endured that night. The next day, Helen was insane, and a wild laugh was her only reply to our tender expressions of love. The fourth day she was stretched upon her death-bed. Her reason was restored, and she received the last sacraments. When the priest left her, he told me that Helen desired to see me once more before she died. I entered the room to behold her in her agony.

“‘Wolfangh,’ she said, in a feeble voice, laying her icy-cold hand upon me; ‘I leave you forever; heaven calls me, the angels await me —’

“‘Helen, in the name of God, speak, and tell me what has happened?’

“‘What has happened? Do you know Bentunaro?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Well, he — bore me away — by violence, — and my soul — can — no longer — dwell in my body.’

“‘Bentunaro!’ I exclaimed, consumed by the thirst of vengeance.

“‘Bentunaro!’ she again murmured. ‘Adieu, Wolfangh! One day you will be with me — in heaven — and God — will —’

“And her soul had left its mortal tenement cold and lifeless.”

Tears bedewed the cheeks of the bandit. Ludovic, moved by compassion, pressed his hand in silence.

“Messire,” resumed the bandit, “did Bentunaro deserve death?”

“He did!” replied Ludovic.

“Well,” said Wolfangh, “I left my native village, carrying vengeance in my heart, and upon my person money and a poniard. Long I sought the wretch without meeting him; but my burning desire to avenge Helen only grew stronger by the delay. One day, I was walking at Brussels, along the banks of the Senne, when my attention was attracted by the loud talking of a party near me. I recognized the voice of my enemy. My blood boiled in my veins, and my heart beat so violently that it almost deprived me of motion; but vengeance steadied my arm, and I plunged my dagger to the very hilt in the breast of the villain. I sprang into the Senne, and soon swam to the opposite bank. There I stopped in feverish joy over my triumph. Two pistol-shots were fired at me, but missed their aim. With indescribable pleasure I saw my victim writhing on the ground, and as soon as I was certain of his death, I ran at full speed, in order to escape pursuit. I was driven from place to place; no one was willing to shelter me. My father suffered much on my account, until at last grief and anxiety carried him to the grave. Nowhere could I find an asylum; and if by chance the name of Wolfangh was pronounced on the public square, all cried out: ‘Kill him! kill

him!' as though I were a wild beast. Tell me, Messire, what could I do, without a home, without resources? After wandering about for a long time as chance led, I found a secure retreat in this forest. Necessity made me a robber; the pursuit of the law made me a murderer. I have suffered much, and keen has been my remorse for my culpable life; but fatality was stronger than my will. Receive, Messire, my thanks for the means of salvation which you indicate. The image of Helen arises in her beauty before my eyes, and I trust that her prayers will obtain favor for me from God."

He ceased speaking, and remarking the emotion caused in Ludovic by his recital, he arose and said:

"Messire, I do not wish to detain you longer. Tell Godmaert that I accept his conditions, and that I will send a spy into the city, that I may have information as to the progress of affairs. Let him arrange all things, and the day of the revolution Wolfangh and his band will be there to give their aid."

"One word more before leaving you, Wolfangh. One of your men expressed to me the intention of pillaging the churches."

"They suppose they will be permitted to do so; but have no fear; my will is a law they dare not violate."

"That is not the only request I have to make. I wished to suggest an opportunity of performing an action which would merit for you the pardon of your guilty life."

"Speak, Messire; I am ready to adopt any plan you propose."

“Perhaps, Wolfangh, you do not know that many of those who call themselves Gueux belong to the sect of Iconoclasts, and they eagerly await the day of the revolution in order to destroy all the emblems of our religion.”

“I know it, Messire.”

“Then aid me and my friends to protect the churches. I foresee great difficulties, but perhaps we may be successful in our efforts.”

An expression of satisfaction illumined the countenance of the brigand. He caught Ludovic’s hand, and said, earnestly:

“Messire, you shall be satisfied with Wolfangh.”

An armed bandit was directed to guide Ludovic. He conducted him to the edge of the forest; there the young man took the road leading to the cabin of the laborer. He would undoubtedly have lost his way in the darkness of the night, had not the grateful peasant, anxious for the safety of his benefactor, placed a light within the window. This beacon guided Ludovic to the isolated house. Joyous acclamations greeted his entrance, and the peasant invited him to partake of some refreshments. The young man gladly seated himself at the table, and, to the great contentment of his hosts, did credit to the frugal repast with better appetite than if he had been a guest at a royal feast.

“Messire,” said the peasant, “it is midnight; and, as the road is infested with robbers, I beg you to pass the night in my humble dwelling.”

Saying this, he pointed to a bed prepared with clean sheets. Ludovic, thinking that it would be impossible at that late hour to inform Godmaert of

the success of his mission, determined to accept the offer of the laborer, and he threw himself upon the bed, fatigued, but satisfied with the result of his expedition.

CHAPTER V.

VALDÈS'S REVENGE.

THE very day that Ludovic had left for the accomplishment of his mission, both mind and heart occupied by the image of his beloved Gertrude, there transpired at the residence of Godmaert events which were to cost him many hours of sorrow.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon; Godmaert and his daughter were seated together in conversation upon indifferent subjects.

Suddenly, Gertrude asked:

"Father, has Valdès the power of executing the threats he uttered against you?"

"What threats, my child?" said the astonished Gueux.

"The servants say that he swore to have you cast into prison. Did you not know it?"

"Into prison!" he exclaimed, whilst his countenance expressed an intense anxiety.

"Gertrude," he continued, sadly, "the Spaniard is a rich and artful man. My child, should fate separate you from your old father, would you have fortitude to bear the blow?"

"But, father," replied the terrified young girl,

“you have committed no crime! The judges would soon be convinced of your innocence, and they would never suffer you to be imprisoned.”

“My child, you do not know the world. It is quite probable that they may send armed men to seize me. Although our enterprise is praiseworthy, we are offenders according to existing laws; because we revolt against the reigning sovereign. I fear nothing for myself, but much for you, my beloved daughter, who have already endured so many sorrows on my account.

“Were you to see,” he continued, tenderly caressing her, “a band of soldiers enter the room, and carry off your father, would you at my solicitation await with resignation the happy or unhappy issue of the affair, without aggravating by your tears the trial to which I would be subjected?”

“Gertrude, you do not answer.”

“Oh! yes, father,” said the young girl, “I would not leave you; I would console you by my love.”

“But suppose you could not accompany me, that we must part without being able to foresee the term of our separation?”

Gertrude wept bitterly, and replied only by her sobs.

“My child,” said the old man, embracing her, “be courageous, have fortitude.”

“Oh! no, no,” she said; “fate has not in store for us so hard a trial.”

“God grant that what you say be true!” replied the Gueux, doubtfully.

He knocked upon the table. At the signal, the old Teresa entered.

“Teresa,” said Godmaert, “attend to the directions I am about to give you. I know your affection for my daughter. You have long been as a mother to her. Perhaps to-day or to-morrow Antwerp may be in flames, and its streets may run with blood. I will not desert my friends, and, much as I value life, I will cast my life in the scale; in the name of my country and my honor, I commit Gertrude to your care. From this moment do not leave her, for the storm is gathering fast above our heads.”

A piercing cry escaped Gertrude’s lips.

“O my God! they come!” she exclaimed, in anguish.

A confused sound of voices was heard in the hall.

“Come and embrace me, my child, and do not despair. God will protect me from harm.”

The young girl sobbed aloud. By Godmaert’s order, Teresa drew her by force from the room.

“Gertrude may be mistaken,” said Godmaert.

But she had perceived the soldiers in passing, and long did her apartments echo to her cries of anguish.

The captain approached the Gueux, and read to him an order from the governor, by which he was to be conducted to the citadel as a prisoner of state. The old man cast his cloak around his shoulders, and followed the captain without uttering a single word. At the outer door were stationed a score of soldiers appointed to escort him, and a large crowd had collected, awaiting with curiosity the appearance of the prisoner. As soon as the people saw Godmaert, a cry of vengeance escaped from the multitude; but any demonstration was soon checked by the armed

soldiery, and they conducted the Gueux to the citadel without being obliged to use violence.

There, Godmaert saw the cruel Valdès. Fortunately for him, the old man was unarmed, or he would have paid with his life for his triumphant smile.

The prisoner was conducted to a deep and dark dungeon; they chained him to the wall, placed by his side a loaf of bread and a pitcher of water; then leaving him, they fastened the door with lock and bolt.

The unfortunate father cast himself upon the damp straw in an agony of grief. He gave not a thought to the fate which might await him; but the tears of his beloved Gertrude, and the separation from a daughter so dear to his heart, were afflictions which he found difficult to support. A cry of rage and vengeance burst from his lips, and the walls echoed the name of Valdès the traitor.

Whilst the old man was thinking in anguish of his daughter, Gertrude, overpowered by sorrow and despair, had fallen upon a chair. She could not realize what had passed. The misfortune appeared too frightful to be real, and she strove to persuade herself that her old father had not been led away by the soldiers. Her grief so exhausted her, that it at times deprived her of consciousness, and she awoke to the reality only again to fall inanimate.

“Go, Teresa,” she said, at last, “find Father Francis; he can tell me what to do.”

“You forget, Miss, that Father Francis has gone with the Abbot of Saint Bernard.”

“Alas! that is true. Suggest some means by

which I may see my father. Advise me; what step can I take?"

"I know none, unless by entreaties and bribes we can gain the gaoler of the citadel."

"Come," exclaimed Gertrude; "we will go at once! I have money, and words will not fail me. Love and sorrow will give me power to touch the heart of the gaoler."

"You have no idea, Miss, how hard-hearted these people are. If money will not buy him, we have nothing to hope for."

"Come, come," said the young girl, eagerly; "should he have a heart of stone, it will melt before my prayers and supplications."

"I will accompany you in your attempt to see your father; but be more calm, and do not let your grief make you lose sight of a necessary prudence."

Gertrude threw on a black silk over-dress, and set out with Teresa for the citadel.

After having passed many groups of people, some of whom regarded with pity, others with cold curiosity, the unhappy young girl, they reached the prison, which was surrounded by high and thick walls.

"Is my father here?" asked Gertrude, in an agony of grief.

"I think so," replied Teresa. "Have courage, Gertrude."

She knocked at the door, which was soon opened, grating harshly on the hinges, and they were ushered into the narrow apartment of the gaoler.

"What do you wish, noble lady?" said the gaoler, bowing to Gertrude.

“Is my father here?”

“Yes, lady; if Godmaert is your father.”

“Yes, yes, Godmaert. I know you will take pity on my sorrow, and you will permit me to console my old father for awhile. Oh! do not refuse me! I implore you to grant my petition. If you have children, you will understand how much I suffer. Let me but hear my father’s voice, and I will recompense you generously.”

“Lady,” replied the gaoler, sadly, “but a half-hour ago, Signor Valdès conveyed me an order, signed by the governor, forbidding any interview between Godmaert and his friends. I am truly sorry that I cannot consent to what you ask.”

Gertrude wept anew; then taking the gaoler’s rough hands in her own, she exclaimed, earnestly:

“I implore, I supplicate you, have compassion on a child whose father has been cruelly torn from her. Oh! be not deaf to my prayer. Let my petition move your heart! You are a human being, and you are not devoid of human feeling; you cannot see my tears without being touched by some sentiment of pity. I will not go without seeing my father. I will remain and weep until you yield and conduct me to his prison.”

“Oh!” said Teresa, “take her to her father, or she will die of grief.”

The keys hanging at the girdle of the gaoler jingled, and the two supplicants, thinking he was about to grant their request, joined their hands in a transport of joy, and were commencing to express their gratitude, when the gaoler, who had stepped aside in order to wipe away his tears, approached Gertrude, and said:

“Your sorrow makes me weep. This proves how interested I am in your misfortunes; but I am bound by my duty, and I can do nothing for you. Do not think you can move me by tears. I have seen too much of suffering and despair. I am a gaoler. Ask whom you will, what is a gaoler, and the answer will be that he is a tiger, and such he is, and such he must be.”

At these words he withdrew, leaving the two women to their grief.

“He is unmoved,” said Gertrude, sobbing. “You were right, Teresa; a gaoler is not a man. We will ask help from our friends.”

They left in deeper despair than on their entrance. Gertrude’s first thought was to apply to Schuermans, the poor but generous Gueux. They walked rapidly towards the *Klapdorp*. There the door of an old dilapidated house was opened to their knock.

“O Schuermans!” cried Gertrude, “do you know what has happened to my father to-day?”

“Yes,” replied the Gueux, inviting her in; “I know all. Be calm, do not weep. The traitor Valdès did it. But I have sharpened my dagger; he thinks not of that.”

“Tell me, Schuermans, for the love of God, if there is any way by which I may see my father?”

“None,” replied Schuermans. “I myself in vain begged admittance during a whole hour.”

“Reflect well if some hope may not remain. Men know better than we what should be done.”

Schuermans gazed with pity upon Gertrude.

“Poor child!” he said with a sigh, and shrugging his shoulders as if in despair. “No, Gertrude, there

is no hope for you. I can only advise you to await in your own apartment the result of this affair. I myself will assemble our friends, and if I can mitigate your sufferings, I will go to you immediately. Where is Ludovic de Halmale?" he added.

"Ludovic is absent on important affairs," replied Gertrude. "Oh! if Ludovic were here, I would soon see my father."

"Where did he go?"

"To Zoersel, to see Wolfangh."

"He will be here to-morrow by daylight. Go, Gertrude, and calm yourself. The tears you shed will not alter the facts of the case. Think that devoted friends are watching with solicitude over the life of your father. And now, farewell. I will leave nothing undone to change your sorrow into joy."

The two women returned home without consolation and completely discouraged.

"What shall I do now?" exclaimed Gertrude.

"Be patient, and put your confidence in God," replied Teresa. "Schuermans was right; tears will do no good. Therefore await hopefully Ludovic's return."

"Tears!" said Gertrude, with a sigh. "I can weep no more; my eyes are burning; my heart is broken. Oh! Teresa, how miserable I am! And yet, I have always acquitted myself faithfully of my duties towards God and man."

"Gertrude, Gertrude, would you irritate the Most High, who is the only hope and consolation remaining to you upon earth? Will you draw down upon your head an increase of misfortunes by rebelling against His decrees?"

Pointing to the prie-Dieu, she said, gravely :

“Gertrude, you have done wrong!”

The young girl prostrated herself before the crucifix, and remained a long time in prayer. Teresa, knowing well that humble prayer soothes more than complaint, left Gertrude undisturbed, and knelt by her side.

The sun had disappeared for some time below the horizon, and the streets of Antwerp were plunged in darkness, before Gertrude arose from her knees; then casting herself into Teresa's arms, she exclaimed :

“I did not pray; I did not think of God for one moment; I am a poor, unhappy sinner.”

“Of what were you thinking?”

“Of my father, of Ludovic; and I have offended God because I found no consolation at the foot of the cross.”

Her eyes wandered wildly.

“Gertrude, my poor child,” said Teresa, pressing the young girl to her heart, “what is the matter?”

“If I only knew, Teresa, what my father is doing! I believe he is dead; that is the reason I could not pray.”

She struck her breast, and paced the floor in extreme agitation.

“Gertrude,” said Teresa, “I do know a means by which you can be brought near your father.”

“Speak, Teresa, quick; tell me what it is.”

“Do you know the street John-de-Lierre; it crosses this one?”

“Yes,” replied Gertrude.

“Living there is an old woman; if you have the courage to accompany me to her house, she can tell

you what you wish to discover, and you may depend upon the truth of the information she gives."

"Do you speak of the old woman commonly called the sorceress?"

"The very person."

"Do you think she can tell me what my father is doing and suffering?"

"Yes, my child. I acknowledge, to my shame, that I have often consulted her, and she has never told me what is untrue."

Gertrude insisted upon going to her immediately.

"Who knocks at my door at this late hour?" was asked from the interior of the house.

"Open, Mother," replied Teresa. "You know your neighbor?"

"Wait until I strike a light."

The door was opened slowly and cautiously. When she had recognized her two visitors, she ushered them into a very small room.

A cry of terror escaped from the frightened Gertrude, and she recoiled at the threshold, not daring to enter.

"Walk in, Miss," said the sorceress. "I assure you that you have nothing to fear."

Gertrude entered the apartment trembling and clinging to Teresa.

Disorder and uncleanness characterized the room; two chairs were placed near a massive table, on which were laid a large book, a dagger, a pack of cards, and the skeletons of several small animals. Two black cats were asleep on the chairs. At the entrance of the visitors, they arose, and their movements were so strange that one might have supposed them endowed

with intelligence. A death's-head was on the mantle-piece. The sorceress was a frightful-looking old woman, apparently about a hundred years old. Deep wrinkles furrowed her face, over which her white hair fell in disorder. She fixed her yellow eyes on Gertrude, who was a prey to the keenest anxiety.

"What causes you, my noble lady, to visit a poor old woman like myself so late at night? Do you wish me to tell your fortune by my cards?"

And she commenced shuffling the cards. Removing the skeletons from the table, she spread out the cards; and after examining them, she said:

"Approach the table, Miss; you have nothing to fear. Do you see this king of spades?"

"Yes," replied Gertrude.

"That is your father. At this moment he is very unhappy. I see by the cards that he is weeping and gnashing his teeth."

Gertrude shuddered with horror.

"Wait, wait awhile," said the sorceress; "do you see that two of clubs? They are two days of suffering. The ten of clubs indicates that this suffering will be extreme. But have patience! Something better is in store for him. The king of diamonds near by will deliver your father by coming to his aid."

"Who is it?" demanded Gertrude.

"I do not know his name," replied the old woman; "but I see that it is a man who has committed many crimes in his life, and who lives in the woods like a wild beast."

"Wolfangh!" murmured Gertrude.

"This knave of hearts," pursued the sorceress, "is

a young man who loves you tenderly, and who has not ceased thinking of you during the past day."

"Does he know what has happened to my father?" demanded the young girl.

"No; otherwise he would be near you to share your sorrow. At his side is the queen of hearts. That is yourself, lady; you will one day be happily united with him. Those diamonds show that at this very moment papers are being written concerning your father, and this king of clubs with the knaves appear to me to be his judges. I am convinced that your father is now before a tribunal. I know still more, but it would cause you much pain."

"As it is, we have learned very little," said Teresa.

"What!" exclaimed the old woman. "Have you not discovered that in a short time your sorrow will be at an end; and is it not better for me to conceal what would afflict you more deeply?"

"No," replied Gertrude, extremely agitated; "tell me all you know, and I will reward you generously."

"It is your own desire, Miss. You hear her words, Teresa?"

"Nocturnal messengers," she said to the cats, "do my bidding."

The two black animals disappeared from the room with frightful howls.

"O, my God!" exclaimed the young girl, pressing close to Teresa; "the demons from hell dwell here."

"It is as you say," replied the sorceress; "but do not disturb me in my incantations."

She took an iron cup and placed it on a gilded

tripod. She thrice rubbed a piece of purple silk upon the death's-head, steeped in a liquid from a phial, then threw it into the cup. A bluish flame arose in circles. The sorceress took her book of magic, and, having passed her withered hand several times over the flame, she turned the pages, and muttered some words which had a frightful sound. She ran three times around the table and invoked the infernal spirits.

The cats returned mewling.

It is easy to understand that the poor girl was terrified, but suffering had so exhausted her that her sensibility was somewhat deadened. Teresa shuddered in every limb; but her curiosity was greater than her terror, and as she had, on former occasions, been present at such scenes, she was enabled to support Gertrude.

"Tell me, now," she said, taking the young girl's hand, "will you be angry with me, if, when I have shown you the truth, your grief is increased?"

"No," replied Gertrude, trembling; "did I not ask it myself?"

"Will you see your lover?"

"Yes."

"Approach the fireplace. You are afraid of the cats? Go," she cried out, and the two animals disappeared.

She took the death's-head and placed it on the table.

"Approach, Miss, and look in this mirror," and she drew a curtain which covered a glass hanging above the fireplace.

"I see Ludovic asleep," said Gertrude. "Look,

Teresa, how tranquilly he reposes. A man watches over him with solicitude. A sweet smile is on his lips — he dreams.”

“Yes,” said the old woman; “he is dreaming of you.”

The calm sleep of her betrothed seemed to give Gertrude some consolation.

“Does this young gentleman resemble your lover?”

“Yes, it is himself,” replied Gertrude. “When shall I see him?”

“To-morrow, at sunrise,” answered the old woman.

Gertrude rejoiced that she would soon have Ludovic to aid her.

“Now, will you see your father?”

“Yes.”

“Then step aside.”

She let fall the curtain which covered the mirror.

“Have patience, Miss, until the apparition is formed. You are about to witness a terrible scene, and perhaps you may not have strength to endure the emotions of your heart.”

“You mistake,” said Gertrude. “Show me my father alive, and my courage will not fail.”

“Then place yourself before the glass,” said the sorceress, raising the curtain.

Scarcely had her eyes fallen upon the mirror, when she shrieked with horror, and fell senseless to the ground. Teresa began to weep bitterly over the inanimate form of her mistress, and to lament the many sufferings she had endured that day.

“I knew what would be the consequence. Did I

not foretell it? But I can recover her from this swoon."

"What did she see?" demanded Teresa.

"Look yourself," said the sorceress, pushing her before the mirror.

Teresa recoiled, screaming aloud.

What had they seen? The old Godmaert in the midst of executioners, subjected to horrible tortures; his features contracted by pain, and the blood flowing from his body. The sight had almost broken his daughter's heart.

"What can I do with my poor mistress in this condition?" said Teresa, sobbing.

"Here is a phial," said the old woman, "the contents of which will revive her. When I will have given her this, she will arise and follow you home in silence. She will entirely forget what has passed. Put her to bed immediately; the voice of her lover alone will rouse her from her sleep. I hope, when you see the accomplishment of the events I have predicted, that you will not forget me."

She poured slowly into Gertrude's mouth the contents of the phial. She arose, and stood immovable without speaking.

"Walk before her, Teresa," said the sorceress. "Be not disturbed about the young lady; she will follow you step by step. Farewell. Do not speak to her; she would not understand you." And the door closed behind the two women.

Teresa walked in the direction of their residence, and, glancing behind her, she saw that Gertrude was quietly following. When they had arrived at home, the young girl permitted herself to be undressed,

and no sooner was she laid upon the bed than she fell into a deep sleep.

Teresa sat by her side to watch her, but fatigue and excitement overpowered her, and she, too, slept heavily.

CHAPTER VI.

GODMAERT BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL.

WE will go back in our narrative, and see if the sorceress, in showing her father to Gertrude in so horrible a condition, had presented a picture of the reality.

The Spaniard, Valdès, had been present when Godmaert was arrested, and he remarked, not without apprehension, that the people sympathized with the Gueux. He had been filled with anxiety when the murmurs and cries of deliverance had arisen from the crowd. But no sooner had the doors of the prison closed on his victim, than he took measures to expedite the examination of his accusations.

Godmaert lay on the floor of a dungeon, into which neither light nor air penetrated. He thought of his daughter's grief, and bitter tears flowed down his cheeks; so wholly absorbed was he in these thoughts, that he was insensible to the pressure of the iron chain around his waist. The time he had passed in prison seemed to him very long, although the rays of the setting sun still illumined the walls of the citadel.

At ten o'clock in the evening, the door of his dungeon was opened.

"Godmaert," said the gaoler, "arise. I am directed to conduct you before the tribunal."

He unloosed the chain by which he was fastened to the wall. Two armed men seized the old man, and led him through several dark passages into a vast hall, arched like a church. The ceiling was very low, and the smoky lamp which burned upon the table enlightened it sufficiently to make all objects in it visible. A large wooden crucifix skilfully carved, and a book of the Gospels with a silver clasp, lay on the table. Two daggers, crossing each other, the symbol of a bloody justice, were placed upon the open book of the Gospels.

At a second table were seated four persons, dressed entirely in black; by their grave and serious countenances, they might be easily recognized as judges. Paper and pens were placed before them, that they might note the acknowledgments of guilt which they expected from the accused. At the door of the room stood two armed men, with drawn swords in their hands.

At the other end of the apartment might be discovered, by the dim light of the lamp, some instruments heaped upon the floor; there were wheels, ropes, benches, and chains, with others of a similar nature. These were instruments of torture which, at that period, were used in all important trials to force the accused to confess his crimes.

Godmaert gazed with horror upon these bloody auxiliaries of the law; but he shuddered still more, when, casting his eyes around, he saw in a dark corner of the hall his enemy, Valdès.

“Bring forward the prisoner,” said one of the judges, and Godmaert was conducted by the armed men before the table.

Having conferred a few moments with his colleagues, the president of the tribunal turned to Godmaert, and said:

“Approach nearer. Place your hand upon the image of your Saviour and the book of Gospels, and swear that you will tell the truth, and nothing but the truth.”

“I swear by the God who hears me!” said Godmaert, laying his hand upon the crucifix.

“Return to your former place, and listen attentively to my words. The troubles which agitate the Low Countries, and the audacity of the Iconoclasts, have induced the government to use no clemency, but to proceed with rigor against disturbers of the peace. You are known, Godmaert, to be one of the leaders; your life is forfeited to the law; but in consideration of the eminent services which you formerly rendered our Emperor Charles, I have been fully empowered to act in your regard with extreme indulgence. I can liberate you at once, if you will swear that in future you will not take part in any movement against the Spanish government, and that, if you should be requested to join the insurgents, you will openly oppose them.”

Godmaert was stupefied by these words; but he saw Valdès's smile of triumph, and, regarding his judges fixedly, he proudly replied:

“A soldier never betrays his friends. I consider the Spanish supremacy a misfortune to my country; and if left at liberty to act according to my sense

of justice, I will combat against it at the risk of my fortune and life."

"Is this your definitive reply, Godmaert?"

"It is my irrevocable determination."

"It pains us to have recourse to the rigors of the law in the case of so illustrious a noble as yourself. But, as officers of the state, we must do our duty without faltering."

"Do what you consider your duty. I will do mine."

"Reply, then, to my interrogatories. You are accused, in the first place, of being chief of the Gueux of Antwerp, and of having sworn a mortal hatred to the government of Philip II."

"It is true," replied Godmaert, in a firm, decided tone.

"Of having sought to cause a revolution among the people, and of using every means to excite an aversion towards the present government. It is said that you describe the Spanish domination as false and tyrannical; that you assist at assemblies which deliberate on the means of withdrawing the Low Countries from the obedience they owe their lawful sovereign."

"I have urged the people to revolt; I have pictured the Spanish rule such as it is,—odious and tyrannical. The accusation is true."

"All that is true, and you acknowledge it with so much cool indifference?"

"Should I tell a lie, after having sworn to tell the truth?"

The judge shook his head in astonishment. He turned towards the clerk and conversed with him for

several minutes. Then pursuing his interrogatories, he said to Godmaert:

“Moreover, you are accused of having addressed to the government, under the form of a petition, a defamatory engraving.”

“That is false!” exclaimed Godmaert, indignantly.

“Of having yourself circulated among the people copies of this engraving.”

“I tell you that is an odious falsehood. I have never even seen this engraving. What traitor dares bring against me this infamous charge?”

“Valdès,” said the judge, “he denies the accusation?”

Valdès approached; he had already arranged the words in which he would impute the offence to his victim.

“Godmaert,” he said, in a hypocritical tone, “you must certainly remember that one day, when I was dining with you, you showed me an engraving in which the government was presented under the most insulting design.”

“You lie, Valdès, you lie,” exclaimed the old Gueux, contemptuously.

“Silence, prisoner! you are forbidden to speak. What was the design of the engraving?”

Valdès replied:

“The government was represented as seated in a child’s chair, presenting the most ridiculous appearance; she had a hook for a sceptre and a child’s cap for a crown. The Count de Berleimont held her in leading-strings; and on the other side, Flemish nobles who have preserved their allegiance, such as Aerschot, d’Aremberg, and others, offer her sweetmeats to pre-

vent her from crying whilst a Gueux scourges her. Godmaert showed me this engraving, and laughingly said, 'The lady is drawn to the life.'"

"Perjured villain!" exclaimed Godmaert; "do you not tremble whilst uttering such falsehoods in presence of the bloody cross upon which God died for us? Traitor, vomited forth from the depths of hell!"

"Prisoner," interrupted Ortado, one of the judges, "have you only that to offer in your defence?"

"What will you have me say, but that yonder wretch has lied most infamously?"

"We have received the deposition of the man whom you yourself sent to the government officers with the insulting engraving."

"What is the man's name?"

"Albert Merckhof."

"Albert Merckhof? I do not know such an individual. Signor Valdès, I doubt not, is acquainted with him," said Godmaert, casting a withering glance at his accuser.

The judge resumed:

"We have reason to believe that you are guilty of treason, since you freely confess that your sentiments of hatred against the existing government are without bounds. Are you able to invalidate the testimony of Valdès and of Merckhof?"

"No; all I can do, is to declare upon my honor that it is false."

"You still persist in that declaration?"

"Yes."

"And yet everything tends to prove your guilt. I command you, in the name of the law, to confess your crime and declare your accomplices."

“I will not reply to a calumny.”

“For the last time, Godmaert, I advise you to acknowledge your guilt, or you will force us to have recourse to violence. Yes or no; are you guilty of the crime with which you are charged?”

“No.”

The judge rang a bell, and two stalwart men entered the hall.

“To the torture!” said the judge.

Godmaert trembled in every limb. The torture! How frightfully the words rang in his ears. His terror, however, soon subsided. He reflected how often he had exposed his life on the field of battle; he fortified himself by the thought that the suffering he was about to endure was a sacrifice for his country, and that he owed it to his honor to confound his enemy Valdès by his courageous endurance. Strengthened by this thought, he resolved to support the torture with intrepidity and without a complaint. Whilst he was thus animating his courage, the executioners were preparing the instruments of torture. One of them mounted a ladder, and passed a rope through a pulley suspended to the ceiling. Beneath this they placed an apparatus composed of numerous pieces of heavy wood, in which were several smaller ropes. By means of a screw, these pieces of wood could be more and more widely separated from each other.

“It is ready,” said the executioners, as if they had just performed a simple and ordinary piece of work.

The two men placed the Gueux standing upon the instrument of torture. The judges approached the prisoner and sat down. Their countenances indi-

cated a cold insensibility, and it was evident that they were familiar with such scenes.

Valdès, in order the better to enjoy Godmaert's sufferings, placed himself behind the judges. His eyes glistened with a cruel curiosity; nothing could have been more pleasing to his ferocious heart, than the sight of the torments to be inflicted on his enemy.

"Accused," demanded the president, "do you acknowledge your guilt?"

"I have committed no crime."

"Commence your work."

At this order, the executioners fastened the ropes which descended from the arched ceiling to Godmaert's arms; his feet were in like manner bound to the instrument.

At a signal from the judge, the executioners pulled the ropes with great force. The pulley creaked, and the unfortunate Godmaert was slowly elevated until the rope confining his feet was stretched to its utmost extent. The Gueux was suspended in the air, his arms and legs extended as a crucifix; not a groan escaped him. He regarded his judges steadily.

"Do you acknowledge your crime now?" demanded the president.

Godmaert made no reply.

The judge made a sign with his hand to the executioners. A heavy blow from a hammer resounded through the hall, and Godmaert's limbs were more widely stretched.

"Do you confess?" immediately demanded the judge.

The beams were separated by another inch.

“You obstinately refuse to reply to us; therefore you are the cause of your now suffering.”

Several blows from the hammer followed in quick succession; the ropes had penetrated his flesh.

“You do not speak?”

Another blow, and the joints of the prisoner snapped.

“Stop!” cried the president.

The Gueux fell senseless. The sight excited no compassion in the judges; they knew it would end thus. Valdès experienced a savage joy.

The body of Godmaert was borne to a chair by the executioners, who busied themselves in restoring him to consciousness. Long he lay inanimate, his limbs cold and rigid.

“Will you condemn him now?” asked Valdès, in a low voice.

The president, to whom he addressed the question, regarded him distrustfully.

“Signor Valdès,” he said, “we accomplish a sad duty. Do not disturb us; we have not yet finished with him.”

This reply brought a frightful smile to Valdès’s face, and he cast a glance of triumphant hate upon the senseless Godmaert.

“Has he recovered consciousness?” said one of the judges.

“He begins to revive.”

Godmaert at last opened his eyes, and his features were contracted by pain as he took the wine presented him by the executioner.

“Why do you bring me back to life?” he asked.
“Is my torture finished?”

"I think not," replied the executioner, in a whisper. "Commend your soul to God; for you will not leave this room alive."

"I shall die a martyr to my country's cause," said the old man, feebly.

He sought to move his limbs, paralyzed by the tension, but he had no power to do so.

"Godmaert," said the president, "will you confess your crime, in order to escape additional torture?"

"I confess?" replied Godmaert; "no; it is a consolation to brave your cruelty. According to your despotic laws, you may torture my body; but my soul is strong, and shrinks not from the death you prepare for me."

"You will confess nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Apply the reeds!"

Godmaert offered not the least resistance, as they divested him of his clothing and fastened him by his neck to a pillar. His feet were so firmly clasped by iron rings, that, whatever might be his sufferings, it would be impossible for him to move. Then the executioners covered his naked body with an immense number of reeds split in the centre, which caught the flesh so tightly that the blood oozed through the skin. The pain must have been intense, for Godmaert's muscles contracted convulsively. His face became purple, and his eyes started from their sockets.

It was in this condition that Gertrude saw her father in the mirror.

The judges silently contemplated this barbarous scene. Perhaps their hearts may have been touched

with compassion for the unfortunate victim; but their exterior bespoke an entire insensibility.

The cruel, perfidious Valdès inquired if this were the worst torture; and when told by the executioner that he knew of no greater suffering, this soul, fit associate for the demons of hell, regretted that his vengeance was exhausted.

“Do you confess?” demanded the president of Godmaert.

He received no reply. The strength of the Gueux had yielded under the infliction. A stifled groan escaped from the agonizing old man and his head fell upon his breast. His arms hung lifeless in the iron rings.

“He is dead!” said the executioner, with evident pleasure, as he collected the instruments. Certainly, this man found no pleasure in his office, when he rejoiced at the fatal termination. The judges appeared disturbed by the result of the torture; they hastily signed a paper presented by the registrar, and withdrew.

“I am glad he is dead, the poor man,” exclaimed the executioner; “he has, at least, escaped the severest torture of all.”

“What torture?” asked Valdès.

“Had he not died,” replied the executioner, “melted pitch would have been poured into his wounds.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Valdès, and he went away regretting that his victim had been spared this suffering.

Godmaert was not dead; by degrees he revived.

The executioners, who had just before rejoiced at his death because it terminated his torture, now

lavished upon him every care and attention. They bathed his wounds, and gave him wine before reconducting him to prison. The gaoler, touched with pity by the condition of the old man, did not replace the manacles.

The dungeon was locked, and the poor Gueux remained alone without consolation. He had no bed but the straw, the points of which entered his wounded flesh, and at last deprived him of consciousness. There is a degree of suffering which would always cause death, had not nature provided for man, by rendering him, under the excess of pain, insensible to it.

Godmaert had reached this degree. He thought neither of heaven, nor of Gertrude, nor of himself; he slept. It seemed the sleep of death; and yet it was not an eternal sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEATH OF VALDÈS.

THE rays of the rising sun were breaking through the morning mist. The opening of doors and windows disturbed the silence which had reigned in Emperor Street.

Teresa had arisen, and was standing by the side of Gertrude, who was still asleep.

“Poor child!” she whispered; “sleep on: it will be a sad awakening for you.”

She imprinted a kiss upon her brow with maternal tenderness.

The color had returned to Gertrude's cheeks, and apparently no evil effect had been caused by her visit to the sorceress.

Suddenly, the sound of a horse's tread was heard without.

"He has come!" exclaimed Teresa, joyfully. She descended hastily, and opened the door for Ludovic, whose arrival she had so impatiently awaited.

"How is Gertrude?" he asked.

"She is well," replied Teresa.

"Can I speak to Godmaert?"

"Godmaert is in prison."

"In prison!" he exclaimed, turning pale.

"Yes, Messire, in prison."

"Heavens! and Gertrude?"

"She is asleep."

"Why was Godmaert arrested?"

"Do you know Valdès, Messire Ludovic?"

"Valdès! I have reason to know him."

He involuntarily laid his hand on the hilt of his sword, but removed it at once.

"Teresa," he said, "tell me quickly all that has happened."

She related briefly the occurrences of the previous night.

"The sorceress," she added, "said that your voice alone would have power to rouse Gertrude from her sleep."

Ludovic uttered only the one word, "Valdès!" fixing his eyes upon his dagger.

"Come," said Teresa; "you are obliged to go to my mistress."

She conducted him to Gertrude's room. Under

other circumstances, he would not for an instant have thought of entering her apartment; as it was, the idea of the respect due her never crossed his mind.

“Speak to her, Messire,” said Teresa, “in order to awaken her.”

“Gertrude, my beloved!” he said, with emotion.

The young girl was aroused by his voice.

“Ludovic, have you indeed returned? You have been absent so long, so very long.”

The young man was terrified by Gertrude’s calmness. He remembered Wolfangh’s recital;—grief had crazed Helen. He trembled in every limb.

“Your father, Gertrude?” he said.

“My father?” replied the young girl, with a wild expression, putting her hand to her head. “Oh! yes, my father.”

She was restored to the consciousness of her misery, and she burst into tears.

“Go to the library and await me there,” she said to Ludovic.

Ludovic, reassured as to the state of her mind, left the room as she desired, and she soon joined him in the library.

“Ludovic,” she said, weeping, “have you heard what has happened to my father?”

“Yes, Gertrude, I know all. But dry your tears. I will not take a moment’s repose until I succeed in liberating Godmaert. I will go at once to Father Francis.”

“Unfortunately, he has gone to the Abbey of Saint Bernard. His absence deprives us of our only resource. My poor father is immured in a dungeon,

and the consolation he might derive from my presence is denied him."

"Father Francis at Saint Bernard!" said Ludovic, in despair. "What shall we do? He alone can aid us. Have our friends made any efforts to obtain Godmaert's release?"

"We have done what we could, but without success. And I expected your arrival with so much confidence! I hoped that you, Ludovic, would gain me admittance to his prison. Another hope crushed. I must then leave him alone, abandoned, in his dungeon! Perhaps, O my God! he is already dead."

Her voice was hushed in one cry of anguish.

Ludovic gazed upon her as though his mind were absorbed in thought, and the word, "death! death!" several times escaped him.

"Perhaps tortured,—dying,—it may be dead!" gasped Gertrude.

The young man gnashed his teeth with rage. At last he exclaimed:

"You shall see your father, Gertrude; I swear it on my honor! You shall see him before night, or never again will I come into your presence."

The young girl, pale and trembling, sprang towards Ludovic, regarded him with feverish anxiety, and, joining her hands, cried out:

"O Ludovic! what a terrible oath! Spare my grief. Cannot you comprehend it? I did not require such an oath. Now I must lose either my father or you. O my God! how miserable I am! Even Ludovic turns against me."

The young man seemed not to hear her words; he stood as it were transfixed, and said, as though speaking to himself:

“Yes, I must, I will shed the blood of the wretch. He, who is the cause of so much grief, shall die a cruel death!”

He drew his sword, and contemplating the blade, he added:

“I had vowed to devote the sword of my noble father to my country’s cause; and it will be defiled by the blood of a villain!”

Whilst Ludovic pronounced these words, Gertrude, thrown back in her chair, was so pale and inanimate, that, were it not for the tears which flowed down her cheeks, one would have supposed her to be dead. Ludovic’s eye at last fell upon the unfortunate young girl. He approached her and took her hand. Her respiration became difficult, and her bosom heaved. What an agony of suffering to Ludovic! Agitated by contending emotions, by a religious sense of right, by love, devotion to his country, and the thirst of vengeance, he knew not what to do.

“Gertrude! dear Gertrude!” he exclaimed.

“Leave me; let me die alone! Ludovic. My father in a dungeon! you, an assassin! O my God! would that I could die!”

At this moment the noise of wheels was heard before the door. The two regarded each other inquiringly. Could Godmaert have returned? This question was asked plainly by their brightening eyes. Gertrude sprang up quickly, and her tears ceased to flow. The door opened, and at the sight of Father Francis they both uttered a cry of joy.

It was a touching scene. The white-haired priest stood in the middle of the room; the two unfortunate young people had each thrown an arm around

his neck, as shipwrecked mariners cling to a spar as a means of preserving life; Gertrude's head rested upon the breast of the old man, and her tears of joy fell abundantly. Not a word breaks the solemn silence. The priest lifts his eyes to heaven; he places a hand on the heads of Ludovic and Gertrude; he prays—he invokes the all-powerful help of God. How beautiful in his invocation is the venerable old man!

Having finished his prayer, he said:

“My dear children, I know the terrible misfortune which has overwhelmed you—”

“Oh, Father!” exclaimed Gertrude, “how bitterly we have deplored your absence! But, now that you are with us, hope revives in my heart. God Himself has sent you to us!”

“I learned at Saint Bernard of your father's arrest. I could not leave you alone under so painful a circumstance. I immediately obtained the Abbé's carriage, and went to see the chief judge. But you must still exercise your patience. The judge is at Brussels, and he will not return before evening. But in the meantime be consoled, for I shall visit Godmaert before that hour.”

“Oh, Father,” cried Gertrude, clasping her hands, “let me accompany you!”

“That is impossible, my child; you know that the order was given to admit no one. As Godmaert's confessor, I am not included in the prohibition. I am exhausted, my child, by my journey, and I am still fasting. Give me breakfast, and in an hour's time I will be with your father, and I will remain until night.”

“Oh! how good you are!” exclaimed Gertrude. “Your words of consolation will be as balm to his suffering heart.”

Teresa was summoned by Gertrude, and received her mistress' order to prepare a good breakfast for the venerable priest. The hope that Father Francis might be successful in his efforts in behalf of Godmaert rendered Gertrude calmer, and they conversed together on the situation of affairs. Ludovic alluded to his intention of revenging himself by the death of Valdès.

“My son,” said the priest, with severity, “your heart is full of worldly passions. Beware! for by such passions as these the evil spirit seeks to destroy your soul. To gratify a personal vengeance, you annihilate a creature of God, your neighbor, whom the sublime precept of the gospel commands you to love as yourself. You shed the blood of a sinner; you cast, in his sin, into the eternal abyss, him who might, perchance, become reconciled to God; for no crime is too great to find mercy.” The priest took Ludovic's hand. “Have faith, my son, and repent for the guilty desires which your passion has excited; and thank God that you were spared the actual commission of a murder.”

Teresa entered at this moment to say that breakfast was served in the dining-room. As the priest was about to leave the room, Gertrude detained him, saying:

“Father Francis, Messire Ludovic promised me to make every effort to procure me admission to my father to-day. Do you think it advisable for him to carry out his intentions?”

The priest reflected a moment, and replied:

“I have not the least hope that he will succeed ; nevertheless, there may be some chance.”

He turned to Ludovic, and said :

“Go, my son ; it will mitigate your sorrow to know that you have left nothing undone. But be prudent ; do not yield to hatred or the desire of revenge.”

Ludovic bade adieu and left at once. The priest and Gertrude went to the dining-room.

Ludovic, after parting with Gertrude, repaired at once to the prison, and tried every means to obtain admittance to Godmaert ; but the gaoler was immovable. The young man entreated, threatened, offered enormous bribes ; all was in vain. As the gaoler, however, was reasonable and obliging where his duty was not concerned, he answered all Ludovic's questions, and informed him that Godmaert had been put to torture. The young man left the prison in despair, and visited the Gueux whom he had met two days before at the house of the old Mother Schrikkel. All, like himself, were deeply moved by what had taken place ; all had made the useless attempt to see Godmaert. Excited as they were, the only plan they could devise for the deliverance of their chief was to hasten the insurrection. For this purpose, they employed every means to excite the people to revolt. At every corner were collected groups of men in a feverish state of excitement. Throughout the city resounded the cry, “Long live the Gueux !” and when a detachment of soldiers appeared, the crowd dispersed into the by-streets, renewing the cry of “Long live the Gueux !” with increased energy.

Ludovic, a prey to intense anxiety, traversed the

excited crowd, and reached the residence of Van Halen. Near the bridge, he met a man enveloped in a large cloak, who accosted him.

“Ludovic,” he said; “what is the news?”

“Schuermans!” exclaimed Ludovic, “is it you? You seem desirous to preserve an incognito.”

“That is true, Messire. Do not mention my name. Have you seen Godmaert?”

“No; I cannot gain admittance. Do you know of the torture inflicted upon him?”

“Yes, I know it. The wretches! the blood-thirsty villains! They imagine that the Gueux dare not avenge themselves!”

“They nearly deprived him of life!”

“Do you know, Messire, who was the cause of it?”

“Yes; Valdès.”

“As soon as I heard it, I went to work, and now all is over. Valdès is dead.”

“Dead?”

“Look, Ludovic; here is his life-blood!”

And opening his cloak, he showed him his blood-stained sword.

“Now you understand why I endeavor to pass unrecognized through the streets.”

Schuermans continued:

“His corpse still lies at the *Guldenberg*, and the murder will soon be discovered. I do not think there were any witnesses of the deed; but, for the sake of security, I must rid myself of this bloody evidence. To-morrow! Ludovic, to-morrow will come the terrible vengeance. Look!” and he pointed to the surging multitude.

“To-morrow!” said Ludovic, sadly. “To-morrow! O my God!”

He thought with horror of the scenes about to be enacted.

“Where are you going?” asked Schuermans.

“I was on my way to see Van Halen, hoping, by his influence, to obtain permission to visit Godmaert in his prison.”

“You will not be admitted to Godmaert, Ludovic. Van Halen failed in his application to the Prince of Orange for the same favor.”

“But suppose, Schuermans, I apply in person to the Prince?”

“You would be too late; he has just left for Brussels.”

“What method then can I adopt?”

“I know of none. Be prepared to drive the Spaniards from the city, and do not forget that we meet to-night at the house of Mother Schrikkel. We will there discuss the arrest of Godmaert. You will be there?”

“Yes.”

“Adieu until this evening!”

Schuermans directed his steps towards his residence in the *Klapdorp*, and Ludovic returned to the palace of Godmaert.

As soon as he entered the library, Gertrude's face brightened into a smile, and she said:

“Shall I send for my wrappings, Ludovic?”

“No, Gertrude; I have been unsuccessful.”

A heavy sigh escaped her.

“Do not despair, Gertrude. Father Francis promised to see the chief judge; and he will more readily receive a permit for your admittance, now that Valdès is dead.”

“Dead?” asked Gertrude, regarding him fixedly.

“Yes, Gertrude; but your Ludovic is not a murderer. Schuermans assassinated him before I met him.”

“Valdès dead! Perhaps my father will be liberated!”

Then, as if reproaching herself for the joy she had testified at the death of their enemy, she added, more calmly:

“Father Francis went to the prison. I have no doubt he is now with my father. I will await his return patiently; for he will console the poor prisoner; and if there be any means of salvation for him, Father Francis has more power than we to avail himself of them.”

“You are right, Gertrude; our only hope is in God’s mercy.”

After a moment’s silence, the young girl resumed:

“But, Ludovic, what is going on in the city? I stood at the window awhile ago, and numerous groups of armed men passed, all repeating the cry, ‘Long live the Gueux!’ Has any contest taken place?”

“No, Gertrude, not yet; but to-morrow will witness horrible profanations. You know not what frightful news I have heard.”

“What news, Ludovic?”

“Horrible, Gertrude, horrible. Herman Stujek, the heresiarch of the Iconoclasts, is to preach to-morrow in the church of Our Lady. Yesterday, after a sermon in which he scandalously outraged God and His saints, he gave notice that to-morrow, at nine o’clock, he would preach in the Cathedral.

The temple of the Lord will resound with his blasphemies; these accursed foreigners will sing their impious and revolting songs before the altar upon which reposes the body of Jesus Christ. They hurl their blasphemies in like manner against the immaculate Mother of our Lord. They apply to her epithets suggested by the spirit of darkness. I would seem to myself defiled even to repeat their blasphemous words."

"Do not the miserable creatures fear the wrath of heaven?" asked Gertrude, indignantly.

"Their hearts are hardened. They abuse the mercy of the God whom they insult. I know not what crimes to-morrow's sun will shine upon; but I am fearful that horrid scenes will meet our eyes."

"What can you fear worse than the profanation of our churches?"

"The mob will destroy the emblems of our faith; they will break to pieces and burn the works of art which adorn our temples; the images of the saints will be thrown down; the paintings torn to shreds; and we will look in vain, after their devastating hands will have done their work, for a remembrance of our religion."

Gertrude arose and walked to the window with Ludovic.

"Look," she said, pointing to the wall of the opposite building; "your fears are not groundless. During your absence, a band of wicked men passed by. They talked insultingly of the Blessed Virgin, and threw bricks against her statue; notice that one of the hands is broken. Ludovic, we placed that statue in the niche; and they shall not injure it again. I will remove it."

“You must not touch it until night; to take it away at this time would be the signal for a general profanation.”

“Oh, Ludovic! suppose they should destroy it. From my earliest childhood I have loved it. When my mother first taught me to lisp the name of God, and to pray to Him, I knelt before that shrine. I was born under its shadow, and it would be a great sorrow to me not to behold it in my old age.”

“It shall not be broken, Gertrude; it shall be in your room to-morrow.”

They thus conversed together for some time. Gertrude seemed to derive comfort from Ludovic's presence, and they awaited hopefully the return of Father Francis.

During this time an impressive scene had passed in one of the deepest dungeons of the prison. This dungeon was very small, and had received the name of the murderer's grave. It was dug very deep under ground, and, having no outlet to the exterior of the building, it was cold and damp. Many a criminal, after having been subjected to torture, had died there.

In one corner of this dismal dungeon burned a small lamp, placed upon the stone floor; its dim light did not illumine the cell, but rendered perceptible a faint outline of its contents — two pillars, to which were fastened an iron collar and iron chains.

On a heap of straw in this dungeon lay Godmaert; his body was wrapped in bloody cloths; his head rested on a hard pillow, furnished him by the compassionate gaoler. Beside him could be distin-

guished a human form, kneeling. By his religious habit and his gray hairs, one might easily recognize Father Francis.

The priest had been silent some time, evidently awaiting a reply from Godmaert. At last he said, sadly:

“Godmaert, my brother, I repeat to you, that in all probability you will die. You are, perhaps, about to appear before the judgment-seat of Almighty God. Oh! in this terrible moment, listen to my words. Will you leave the world without repentance, without forgiving your enemies?”

Godmaert painfully turned his head towards the priest, and replied, slowly and distinctly:

“No, no, Father; I shall not die. I shall live to avenge my country and myself. More than ever I detest and curse their name. Their blood shall flow as mine has flowed —”

“Fever unsettles your mind, my friend. On whom do you wish to be avenged?”

“On whom?” exclaimed Godmaert, as one enraged. “On whom? On our oppressors, who have converted our fair country into a slaughter-house; on those who, by torture, put to death innocent men like myself; on those villanous Spaniards, who think they may, with impunity, trample under foot the flower of the Flemish nobility.”

“My son, my dear son, you have permitted your judgment to be warped by the enemies of religion and by your own pride. Try to be calm, and you will acknowledge your mistake.”

“I know, Father, that your duty requires you to exhort me to the forgiveness of injuries; therefore,

I am grateful for your solicitude in my regard ; but nothing can effect a change in my sentiments. I am thoroughly convinced that my country is oppressed ; that the government is slowly riveting our chains closer and closer ; and were I again to be subjected to torture, were I to die in the midst of torments, with my last breath I would curse the execrable Spaniards ! ”

The priest, discouraged, dropped the hand of Godmaert, and lifting his eyes to heaven, exclaimed :

“ Would you curse your neighbor ? Your innocent neighbor ? ”

“ Innocent ! ” repeated Godmaert. “ Is Valdès innocent ? ”

“ No, Godmaert ; he sinned before God. But are there not some among our own countrymen whose passions drive them to the commission of atrocious crimes ? Would you curse all for the sin of one ? My friend, I did not think you were so hard-hearted. ”

Godmaert, although admitting the force of the argument of the priest, did not choose to yield the point, and did not reply to it directly ; but he exclaimed, with enthusiasm :

“ On this bloody bed, at the close of my life, I remain faithful to the motto of my ancestors. They always combated foreign rulers, and their cry then was what mine is to-day : ‘ All for our country ! ’ ”

“ You have forgotten, Godmaert, the motto of your ancestors. It was : ‘ All for God and my country ! ’ ”

“ It is true, Father, that was their motto, and — it is — also — ”

The voice of Godmaert suddenly expired on his lips ; he pressed his hand to his heart, and his breast heaved with agony.

“O my God! what suffering!” he gasped.
“Father—Francis—it has passed—I am better.”

“For the love of God,” cried the priest, in a supplicating tone, “I conjure you to renounce your hatred and abandon your desire of revenge.”

“My hour has not yet come, Father. Spare me, in my sufferings, the pain of opposing you. The hatred I bear the enemies of my country is immortal and implacable.”

“Thus, Godmaert, my words have no power over your soul? Will you listen to me whilst I refer to facts? Let us examine together how groundless is your hate. Be just and severe in judging your own cause. Do you remember the sad and solemn day when the Emperor, Charles the Fifth, your benefactor and the glory of his country, abdicated the crown? It was at Brussels; you were there, and you heard the words which fell from his august lips: ‘My subjects of the Low Countries, may peace reign among you! Remain united, and be obedient to the laws. Particularly, if you desire to be happy, admit no heresies into your country; and should the bad seed commence to take root, cast it out; for it would cause the destruction of your country.’ You, with others, heard these words and ratified them. Alas! how soon has this salutary advice been forgotten! Scarcely had the emperor gone, when, instigated by ambitious desires, you banded together; you presented demands to the government which favored heresy; and on the refusal of these demands, you

cried out that the country was oppressed; you combated, as despotic acts, every measure adopted to prevent the propagation of the new doctrine. You have excited the people to revolt against their sovereign; knowing it to be false, you authorized the belief that the inquisition was to be established in the Low Countries. You have given the name of Spanish inquisition to the torture which, from time immemorial and under every form of government, has been employed in the Low Countries: you have deceived your countrymen. You have made them believe that a death-blow was aimed at their liberties, because the petition for new and dangerous liberties was rejected. You have leagued yourself with the ambitious nobles, and you have demanded a liberty subversive of religion in the Low Countries. By this, you have invited into your country the unbelievers of France and Germany. They have answered your call; they are here. They have shaken the foundations of the ancient faith of Belgium; they have mined the columns of the true Church; and you, Godmaert, you and your associates, presented them the instruments with which to do the work. And you call this loving and liberating your country! Do you then esteem the religion of your fathers a tyranny? Do you derive glory from attacking the defenders of the Church? Are you so guilty and impious that knowingly you would give aid to the enemies of your faith? Oh! tell me that you repent; ask pardon of God, whom you have irritated. Speak, my friend; let me hear from the brother whom I love the acknowledgment of his error!"

The priest ceased speaking; but in an instant he uttered a cry of anguish as he bent in agony over the body of his friend. Godmaert lay without motion and apparently dead upon the straw; his hands joined rested on his breast.

Trembling and terrified, the priest seated himself by Godmaert's side, passed his hand under his head, and lifted it so that the rays from the lamp might fall upon the face.

"Dead! dead!" he exclaimed, in bitter grief, bedewing with his tears the pale cheeks of Godmaert. "Dead! my best friend, my brother, and I could not save him! Merciful Jesus, have pity on his soul!"

He gently laid the head of the Gueux upon the pillow, and with uplifted hands addressed to God a long and fervent prayer. Suddenly his prayer was interrupted by what seemed to be a low moan from Godmaert. The priest trembled with anxiety, bent eagerly over his friend and fixed his eyes upon his face, holding his breath to catch the least sound; but no movement encouraged him to hope.

Whilst he was thus watching Godmaert, suddenly his hands unclasped, his eyes opened and met those of Father Francis bending over him. He slowly raised one arm, passed it around the neck of the priest, drew his head towards him, and touched his cheek with his icy lips. The heart of Father Francis was filled with an intense joy; he imagined that Godmaert, still unable to speak, wished in this manner to express his repentance.

A few moments afterwards, Godmaert revived. His first words were:

"My good Father!"

“Poor Godmaert,” said the priest, weeping; “did you understand what I said? Did my voice reach your heart?”

“I heard all, Father. I have done wrong, and I demand pardon of God.”

“Saved! saved!” cried the priest, embracing Godmaert. “Now, my beloved brother, should God call you, you may die in peace. Your life, apart from this one fault, was pure. Your soul may now confidently appear before its judge, and we may hope, my friend, to meet one day in the bosom of God. I shall soon follow you, for my life is fast ebbing. Delivered from terrestrial sufferings, we shall continue to love each other in heaven, and we shall be happily reunited for all eternity.”

Whilst thus talking, Father Francis remarked with pleasure that Godmaert was more and more recovering from the faint into which he had fallen. They spoke of Gertrude and Ludovic, and Godmaert received with submission the exhortations of his friend.

After remaining several hours, the priest arose and knocked several times upon the door of the dungeon, which was immediately opened by the gaoler.

“What o’clock is it?” asked Father Francis.

“Nearly nine in the evening,” replied the gaoler.

“Could you not send some one to the prisoner? He is very ill, and I am forced to leave him.”

“Yes, Father; I will call my servant.”

The gaoler left, closing the door after him.

“Have courage,” said the priest to Godmaert. “I am now going to see the chief judge, who must have returned by this time from Brussels. I will

endeavor to obtain some amelioration in your condition, and in an hour I will return with your children. The judge will, I am sure, grant me at least this favor."

Godmaert pressed the hand of the priest with gratitude.

"Go, and may the God whom you serve so faithfully bless and protect you!"

The gaoler returned with his aid, and the priest left the prison and went to the chief judge.

He was well received by this magistrate, but all he could obtain was permission for Gertrude and Ludovic to be admitted to Godmaert's dungeon. He hastily repaired to Emperor Street, in order to give the pleasing intelligence to his afflicted children.

Long had they been looking for him with anxious hearts. No sooner did they perceive him, than Gertrude exclaimed:

"What news do you bring us, Father?"

She trembled as she asked the question, although Father Francis's tranquil expression was a good omen to her.

"My children, God, in His inscrutable designs, has permitted your father to endure horrible sufferings; but we have reason to hope that he will recover."

Tears flowed from Gertrude's eyes.

"Oh!" cried she, in anguish, "you conceal something from me: you have still greater misery in store for me!"

"Be calm, my child, and do not uselessly torture yourself. Your father lives, and you may go to see him. I came to conduct you to his prison."

Radiant with joy, Gertrude caught up her cloak, and threw it around her shoulders, exclaiming:

“Come quickly; I am ready!”

“My children,” said the priest, “you must allow me a few moments’ repose. My feeble body reminds me of my age. My exhausted strength requires some refreshment.”

Gertrude cast aside her cloak, alarmed by the pallor of the priest’s countenance.

“Pardon me, my good Father,” she said; “I see that you are fatigued, worn out. Take the repose you need; I will restrain my impatience.”

She left the room hastily, and soon returned with Teresa, bringing refreshments.

Whilst Father Francis partook of the food so necessary to him, Gertrude prepared to visit her father, and awaited in silence until the priest, arising, said:

“Come now, my children, and try to be cheerful. Do not add to your father’s sufferings by the sight of your sorrow.”

They quitted their own residence, and traversing in silence the dark streets of the city, they reached the prison. As they arrived, the moon emerged from the clouds which had obscured it, and poured its rays upon the sombre building. At the sight of the high walls and iron bars, Gertrude’s heart almost ceased its beatings, and she could scarcely take a step.

The priest knocked; the door was opened, grating harshly on its hinges.

What terror was experienced by Gertrude as she traversed the cold and dark passages! At intervals,

she heard the clanking of chains, or the groans of the prisoners, and each time she imagined it was her father's voice.

At last the gaoler stopped before a massive door covered with iron plates, and thrice turned the key in the lock.

"Father, father!" exclaimed Gertrude, as at last she was admitted; "here is your child, your Gertrude!"

A deep groan was the sole reply.

The dim light of the lamp only permitted her to perceive indistinctly a human form. Father Francis was still at the door, when Gertrude had already thrown herself on her knees beside her father.

"Father, dearest father," she cried, weeping, "what have they done to you that you cannot embrace me?"

"My beloved daughter!" he said, in a feeble voice.

He strove to raise his arms, but they fell powerless upon the straw. Gertrude's tears watered his cheeks. She could not speak; sobs choked her utterance. She passed her hand caressingly over his brow.

"O Ludovic! look," she said, pointing to the blood-stained linen; "see how cruelly they have tortured him."

"Are you here, too, Ludovic? You see they have not spared my gray hairs. My son, raise me a little," said Godmaert.

The young girl sprang up, and, carefully passing her arm under her father's shoulders, she lifted him to a sitting posture.

“Come to me, my beloved daughter; let me embrace you, perhaps for the last time. It may be that God is about to call me to Himself.”

“Say not so, my cherished father,” exclaimed Gertrude, despairingly. “By my loving care I will restore life to your paralyzed limbs, and God will spare you to me for many years to come. Oh! do not die. I could not survive you. Take courage and live; for I shall die without you.”

Ludovic stepped aside; he could not endure the painful scene, and he could find no words to console the desolate young girl.

The priest was kneeling in one corner of the dungeon, praying with clasped hands.

“Where are you, Ludovic?” asked Godmaert. “My days are numbered, my son, and I shall soon descend into the grave, for my respiration is labored and my limbs are swollen. Gertrude, be resigned to the will of God. When God calls us, my child, we cannot escape death. O Ludovic! they tortured me cruelly; the blood flowed from every pore of my body.”

“Valdès is dead, father,” said Gertrude, “and you still live, and you will not die. I will not leave you, and my love will ward off the chill of death. You die? You, my father? No, no, you shall not die. Ludovic, shall he die? Speak. Oh! what a cruel word is death! And you do not answer, cruel Ludovic. Tell me, can my father die?”

“No, no,” said Ludovic, overpowered by the sight of her grief.

“Do you hear, father?” cried Gertrude; “Ludovic says you cannot die.”

"Perhaps my fears may not be realized," said Godmaert.

Gertrude regarded him fixedly.

"Perhaps," resumed the old man, "I may again be at home with you; but as that is extremely doubtful, I wish, Ludovic, before I die, to commit my daughter to your care. Approach, that I may bless you."

Ludovic knelt by Gertrude. Father Francis elevated his heart in still more fervent prayer, begging God to take pity on Godmaert and his children. The dim rays of the lamp fell on the pallid cheeks of the old man and the faces of his children bedewed with tears. Kneeling before Godmaert, they awaited his benediction; he, laying his hand upon their heads, implored the blessing of heaven upon them.

"Ludovic," he said, "I give you my Gertrude in recompense of your love for her, and your generous devotion to your country. Gertrude, love your husband. I pray God to grant his benediction to both of you. Ludovic, I have that to say to you which will fill your heart with joy. I forced you to join the Gueux; I made you become the associate of men whose sentiments were opposed to yours. You obeyed me, although your whole soul revolted against the work to which I obliged you to pledge yourself. But on the brink of the grave, the scales have fallen from my eyes. I thought we were combating in our country's cause; and, alas! we were protecting and aiding the enemies of the Church. From this moment, Ludovic, I revoke the orders I gave you in regard to the insurrection. Perhaps there is still time to save the faith which we have

endangered. In future, follow the dictates of your noble and loyal soul!"

The young man expressed his gratification, but added:

"Godmaert, how shall we prevent the consequences of our own plans? Our associates intend to commence the revolt to-morrow; for this purpose, they meet at midnight."

"To-morrow! That must not be! Herman Stujek is to preach to-morrow in the Cathedral. The insurrection might aid his cause. Fail not, my son, to attend the meeting. Make them comprehend that the revolt must be delayed; that to do otherwise is to endanger religion. I know that your heart will inspire you on this occasion. Rise, my children; your presence has greatly comforted me. Your loving embrace, my dear Gertrude, has infused warmth into my frozen limbs."

"You will recover, dear father, I know you will. Once at home, you will be quickly restored to health. Here you are benumbed by cold; you lie on the bare ground. Your daughter is not near to watch over you, to nurse you; you miss her love and care, my poor father!"

And she pressed him to her heart as if to warm him there.

"Gaoler," said Ludovic, "I will give you one hundred crowns, if you will let me take this prisoner hence."

"No, Messire; I cannot consent."

"Five hundred—a thousand."

"I cannot, and I will not. Would you have me sell my life for gold?"

“I will secure to you by deed my lands of Berchem. Ask more than that: take all I have, provided you will release Godmaert.”

“No, Messire; however tempting your offers may be, they would be no equivalent for my life. I am not willing to run the risk.”

“Oh!” said Gertrude, “be merciful. Will you never perform a good action? Why will you not set my father free? Has he not suffered enough already? I will give you my mother’s jewels. What harm has my father done you? You have no cause of complaint against him. Let him go, I implore you. Then he can be nursed as his condition requires, and he will be restored to health.”

“My noble lady, I must discharge my duty. I have permitted you to remain some time with your father for his consolation. It is all I can do, and you must be satisfied with that. It is near midnight: I can grant you only a few minutes more.”

Gertrude turned to her father and lavished upon him every testimony of affection, until the clock struck twelve. Ludovic in the meanwhile was talking with Father Francis.

“Gertrude,” he said, joyfully, “Father Francis will remain with your father.”

The young girl caught the hand of the priest and kissed it gratefully.

“Be calm, my child,” said the religious, “and return home. Put your trust in Him who can give joy and consolation to the afflicted. Lift your soul in prayer to God, and weep no more.”

Gertrude, in spite of her earnest supplications, was forced to leave the dungeon. Embracing her father

again and again, she at last bade him adieu, and left with Ludovic.

As soon as the young man had conducted her to her dwelling, and committed her to the care of Teresa, he went at once to the meeting of the Gueux.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RESCUE OF GODMAERT.

IT was an hour after midnight. Most of the streets of Antwerp were buried in profound darkness, the lamps having consumed their oil; but the silence and quiet usual to the city at that hour were broken by a confused noise, as if the roaring of the tempest-tossed waves of a distant sea were borne on the winds, and filled the air with mournful and portentous sounds. Amid the indistinct murmur could be distinguished the barking of dogs, the monotonous cry of the watchmen, the ringing step of the guards, and the more stealthy tread of men who mysteriously traversed the streets: such were the signs preceding the outbreak of the revolution.

The Gueux, who had assembled at the house of Mother Schrikkel, were in such numbers that the hall could scarcely contain them. They seemed under great excitement; oaths and imprecations were heard on all sides.

The table, covered as usual with daggers, pitchers, and glasses, stood in the centre of the hall; but as the company was too numerous to be seated around

it, the chairs had been removed to another apartment. The Gueux were standing about in groups. They had not laid aside their cloaks, so that the poniards which they carried suspended from their necks were not visible.

They continued their excited conversation until interrupted by the entrance of another conspirator, whom they questioned eagerly, several voices exclaiming:

“What have you heard, Houtappel? What has happened to Godmaert?”

“You would not believe me,” replied Houtappel, indignantly; “you would not believe me were I to tell you the whole truth. The very executioner seemed to be shocked when relating the horrible history. I shudder even now at the thought—”

“Speak,” said Schuermans, “and tell us what you know.”

“They lacerated Godmaert’s body as if they had been wild beasts; they made him endure the most frightful torments. And why? Because Godmaert, like ourselves, is an ardent lover of his country.”

The Gueux listened with horror, grinding their teeth and clinching their fists.

“Yes, my friends,” continued Houtappel, “thus they treated our venerable chief; after torturing him in this manner, they threw him like a dog upon a handful of straw. Shall this outrage be left unpunished?”

“Vengeance! vengeance!” reverberated through the hall. The assembly became tumultuous; daggers glittered as they were waved in the air; swords were drawn from their scabbards. Horror, indigna-

tion, and a thirst for revenge, had made all present involuntarily seize their arms.

“Spanish dogs!” exclaimed the furious Schuermans. He fell upon his knees, raised to heaven his right hand, holding a drawn dagger, and cried out:

“I swear by the God of my fathers, by the God who hears my vow, that this blade shall drink the blood of the Spaniards; that I devote my life to my country and to vengeance; and that I will descend into the tomb covered with the blood of my enemies!”

The enthusiasm excited among the Gueux by these words was intense. Maledictions and cries of rage resounded on all sides. But the tumult suddenly subsided, as the Gueux, upon the opening of the door, saw Ludovic de Halmale enter.

The young man saluted the assembly, and approached the table, intending to address them; but before he had time to say a word, Houtappel asked:

“Have you seen Godmaert, Ludovic? Is not his body covered with wounds?”

“Yes,” replied Ludovic; “he was frightfully tortured. But, gentlemen, what is your intention? Do you still design to commence the revolution to-morrow?”

“Yes, yes,” they all exclaimed at once.

Houtappel stepped forward, and said, excitedly:

“To-morrow, not a single Spaniard, not a single partisan of the foreigner, shall be left alive. Their blood shall flow in expiation of the outrages offered our country and the sufferings of Godmaert. This is decided. We are assembled only to discuss the best means of putting our plans in execution.”

“If such be the case, gentlemen,” said Ludovic, in a loud, clear voice, “I have come to tell you that you are no longer to consider me as a member of your society. And that you may have no cause to accuse me of treachery, I declare to you, that wherever the Spaniards combat the opponents of our faith, I will combat with them and not against them.”

These words made a deep impression on the Gueux; their brows contracted, and the epithets of “coward! traitor!” were hurled at the young man. Van Halen alone remained calm.

“Coward!” repeated Ludovic. “To accept your injuries and brave your vengeance, gentlemen, demands courage. It is, however, the love of my country which inspires me —”

“Your country?” exclaimed a Gueux, contemptuously. “Say rather that it is fear, — the fear of future punishment. Such miscalled love of country you must have learned from a woman!”

The taunt was received with a general laugh. The blood rushed to Ludovic’s face, and it was evident that he keenly felt the sarcasm. But recalling the object he had in view, he subdued his resentment by a violent effort; although his tone of voice betrayed the bitterness of his feelings, as he said:

“Yes, I love my country; but not as you do, who are willing to sacrifice it to a sentiment of hatred; not as you do, who are ready to abandon it to a terrible contest, and inundate it with blood, to the profit of heresy, and of heresy alone: understand that well. You are right; my mother inspired me with the sentiments which you ridicule.”

“Ludovic,” said Schuermans, “why do you imagine that we are disposed to aid the enemies of our faith?”

“Do you ask why? Have you not attended daily the sermons of Herman Stujek? Have you not enticed the people to go there armed? Have you not, by your opposition, caused the orders of the government to be despised, and rendered ineffectual the measures adopted by the municipal authorities? Under whose protection do the new sects insult our religion? Under whose protection do they prosecute their criminal designs? Under yours, Messires. I do not regard this as a true love of country. Religion forms a part of the inheritance bequeathed to us by our ancestors, and, like liberty, it is the inalienable patrimony of our native land. Our ancient faith is the support, the palladium, of the Low Countries, and whoever thinks otherwise is my enemy.”

Some of the Gueux listened to this harangue in mute astonishment; but the greater part gnashed their teeth, and exhibited every mark of disdainful condemnation.

“The wind has veered rapidly!” exclaimed Van der Voort; “yesterday, Gueux! to-day, papist!”

“Not so,” replied Ludovic. “I have not changed. I pledged myself to unite with you against the Spaniards; but it was upon the express condition that nothing hostile to religion would be required of me; and I would not have done even that much, had it not been to comply with a request of Godmaert. It is yourselves who have changed; you have denied the faith of your ancestors and embraced new doctrines.”

“That is false!” said Van Halen, interrupting him. “I am true to the faith.”

“What do you intend to do to-morrow?” asked Ludovic.

“To-morrow,” replied Van Halen, taking Ludovic’s hand, “I will stand by your side and combat heresy.”

A loud cry of indignation arose from the assembly.

“Another coward! Another traitor! Away with the fanatics! Down with the partisans of the emperor! Cast them out!”

The tumult was general. Poniards were brandished; and they were about to put their threat of expulsion in execution, when Mother Schrikkel rushed into the hall, exclaiming:

“Quick, quick, Messires; make your escape! To the garret! to the cellar! The guard is at the door; the house is surrounded by armed men. Quick, disperse!”

The Gueux frowned darkly upon Ludovic, as if accusing him of having betrayed them, but none of them followed the advice so urgently given by Mother Schrikkel. On the contrary, they formed a half-circle, prepared their pistols, drew their swords, and stood resolutely determined to defend themselves courageously.

The door opened, and a man of lofty stature and extraordinary strength entered. Thick mustaches covered his lips, and from his belt hung several weapons.

“Wolfangh!” exclaimed the Gueux, thrusting their swords back into the scabbards.

“Messires,” said Wolfangh, saluting them, “what does this signify? Why this warlike attitude towards me? Come up,” he called out to the men at the foot of the staircase; “come up.”

A score of brigands entered the hall: the Gueux shrank from them in disgust.

The heavy tread of men apparently bearing a great weight was next heard on the staircase.

“What do you bring us, Wolfangh?” asked Ludovic.

“What do I bring you, Messire? Godmaert.”

“Godmaert!” exclaimed all in surprise.

Four men entered, bearing the old man on a feather bed, and placed him gently upon the floor.

“My friends,” he said, “I am happy to see you once more.”

Ludovic had already caught his hand and kissed it affectionately. The Gueux approached by turns and embraced the old man. Then they surrounded him, silently awaiting an explanation.

“Wolfangh,” demanded Schuermans, “how did you succeed in delivering our chief?”

“Messire,” replied the bandit, “it was done with little difficulty. I planned it yesterday; and I thought I would give you an agreeable surprise. I expected, however, to find Godmaert in better condition. I went quietly to the prison with my men. ‘Who goes there?’ called out an archer stationed with several others near the door. ‘Wolfangh!’ I replied in a voice of thunder, and before I had reached the prison, they had all fled. The gaoler refused to open the door; but when he saw that it was giving way under our hammers and crowbars, he hastened to admit us, begging us to spare his life. Guided by him, we went to the tomb of the assassins, and there we found Godmaert. We removed the noble prisoner from his bed of straw, and making use of the

gaoler's bed as a litter, we brought him here at his own request."

Turning to Ludovic, Wolfangh said:

"Messire, what is the name of the priest whom we found with Godmaert?"

"Father Francis. He is a Dominican."

The bandit repeated the name as if anxious to impress it upon his memory.

"How Godmaert's daughter would rejoice to know he was out of prison!" said Ludovic.

"Father Francis has gone to inform her of it," replied Wolfangh. "My boys," he pursued, addressing his companions, "be at your post to-morrow at eight o'clock. Now, go. Do you remain," he said to the four who had carried Godmaert.

The brigands departed, and the Gueux, after testifying their sympathy with their chief, put the question as to whether the proper time had arrived for commencing the insurrection. Chairs were placed so that the Gueux could be seated around Godmaert. The old noble had been so benefited by the visit of his friends, and the repose he had been allowed, that he was able to move his arms; and Ludovic noticed, with joy, that all danger of his immediate death had passed. His heart was with his beloved Gertrude, and he was jealous that another should have had the happiness of communicating to her the good news.

"Messires," said Godmaert, "I requested to be brought here that I might confer with you upon the course we should pursue. You have, I presume, already discussed the affair."

Houtappel cast a contemptuous glance at Ludovic, and approaching Godmaert, said:

“To-morrow, at eight o’clock, we will meet on the public square. This is decided. We will rouse the people by cries of ‘Long live the Gueux!’ Herman’s sermon in the Cathedral will cause considerable agitation; this we will turn to our advantage. Then we will march upon the town hall; we will make prisoners of every Spaniard or friend of Spain; we will take military possession of the city, and we will inform our friends at Brussels and in the northern provinces of our success. We will appoint new magistrates; and we will engage the people to traverse the whole country, and expel every Spaniard from the cities and villages. I am confident that this plan will meet your approbation.”

Godmaert reflected awhile without speaking. The Gueux anxiously awaited his reply, although they had no doubt that the old warrior would sanction the enterprise. Therefore, great was their consternation, when Godmaert said to them:

“No; I cannot approve this project. The time has not yet come. We cannot now combat the Spaniards —”

“He, too!” exclaimed Houtappel, in a transport of fury. “Brethren, we are betrayed, but not yet delivered into the hands of the enemy. Let us pursue our work without troubling ourselves about these traitors. Let them go to heaven with the Spaniards, the nuns, and the priests.”

This sarcasm roused Godmaert’s indignation; the blood mounted to his cheeks, and he said, with severity:

“You may consider it a fortunate circumstance for yourself, Houtappel, that suffering has exhausted

my strength; otherwise, I would have arrested in their utterance your impious raillery. Ludovic, restrain your anger: I command you."

Houtappel dared not brave the old man further, but he continued grumbling in a low tone to his companions, and reiterating his expressions of contempt and hatred.

"Now I understand it well," said Godmaert, to himself. "Father Francis spoke the truth. There are among us enemies to the faith. Messires," he continued, energetically, "I owe to you who are my friends an explanation of my course. We all equally detest the Spaniards—some from personal motives, all because they are foreigners who oppress and insult us. I have greatly contributed to intensifying this hatred; to-day, I regret having done so. I now see things in their true light; and I perceive, with sincere sorrow, what I and many of you were ignorant of, that all our efforts were directed against our holy religion. Now, deep-seated as is my hatred of Spanish rule, never will I ally myself with the enemies of my faith."

"What has this acknowledgment to do with the revolt of to-morrow?" cried Houtappel, from the other end of the room.

"You understand the connection between the two perfectly well," replied Godmaert; "you know that Herman Stujek and his adherents desire to desecrate the church of Our Lady; you know that they seek an opportunity to devastate our temples, to break the images; and you hope that the insurrection of to-morrow will offer the opportunity. I deplore my present weak state; but for that, I might have been

able to oppose successfully your impious attempts. And you, my friends, who have always listened to me with deference, I conjure you to delay the insurrection. Separate yourselves from those who blush not to mock at holy things, even in the presence of this assembly."

A decided difference of opinion evidently existed among the Gueux. Around Houtappel and Van der Voot were grouped at one end of the hall those who were opposed to any delay. With Godmaert, there remained Ludovic, Van Halen, de Rydt, and about half of those who were present. Schuermans ran from one group to the other, as if uncertain which to join; whilst Wolfangh stood aloof, as a stranger not interested in the discussion.

Houtappel, after having spoken awhile with his adherents, advanced to the centre of the hall, as though about to hurl a defiance to his opponents, and raising his hand to heaven, exclaimed:

"We part company with cowards! Let those who love the name of Gueux, and who wish to combat the Spaniards, follow us! We will continue our deliberations elsewhere. We are unwilling to be heard by traitors."

About one-half of the members of the party left the hall. Houtappel was disappointed when he saw that Wolfangh made no movement to accompany him.

"Come, Wolfangh!" he said. "What have you to do with peaceful people. You look as much out of place as a dog at a game of ninepins."

The bandit raised his pistol, and Houtappel would have paid for the jest by his life, had not Ludovic interfered.

“You are in luck!” said Wolfangh. “Go! there is nothing in common between you and me; and if you attempt to jest with me again, you will suffer the penalty of your raillery.”

Houtappel descended the staircase grumbling.

One Gueux remained in the hall, who had not decided upon the course he would pursue.

“You will not then combat to-morrow?”

“We will combat the enemies of our faith, Schuermans,” replied Van Halen.

“In that case, I prefer to remain with you.”

“I perfectly comprehend the fear expressed by the noble Godmaert,” said de Rydt. “These disseminators of new doctrines have taken advantage of the irritation of a part of the people, and they have transformed them into Iconoclasts. At first, the multitude hated only the Spaniards; the new teachers have inspired them with a hatred of religion, and now they regard the Spaniards and the holy images as one and the same.”

“I have understood,” said Van Halen, “that they propose an attack to-morrow upon the church of Our Lady, which they intend to pillage and burn. How shall we prevent this sacrilege?”

“I have twenty chosen men,” said Wolfangh, “who will punctually execute your orders.”

“Master,” said one of the four brigands, “if we are not permitted to pillage, the Gueux must fulfil their promise, or —”

“Be silent, scoundrel!” cried Wolfangh.

The brigand obeyed, but looked at his chief defiantly. The words surprised many of the Gueux, as

Godmaert was the only one present who knew of the pledges which had been given.

“Our cause,” said the old man, “has become too holy and sublime to admit of the employment of mercenaries. I will pay you the promised reward; but from this moment you are released from any engagement to us. Return to Zoersel, if you wish.”

“They shall remain!” said Wolfangh, with an angry frown. “I will force them to do good. Not another word, wretch!”

The brigand cast down his eyes, cowed by the menaces of his master.

“Listen, Messires,” said Godmaert, “to the plan which could be adopted. There are in our city many good and loyal citizens. Assemble them to-morrow morning, and unite with them in protecting the churches. Schuermans might call to his aid the people of the *Klapdorp*; de Rydt, the brewers of the *Nieuw-Stad*; Ludovic, our friends of the *Kipdorf*; Van Halen, the sailors of the *Burgt*. In a word, let each one bring together those upon whose fidelity he can rely. Go, to-morrow, to the public square and assist the soldiers, if necessary. Perhaps circumstances may suggest a better plan; but I am confident that all will go well.”

The condition of Godmaert seemed much improved; he had taken two glasses of wine, which seemed to revive him. Ludovic noticed it with the utmost pleasure; he remained by the side of the old man, supported his head, and watched every movement, that he might be ready to assist him.

The street-door opened; the rustling of silk was heard on the staircase, and the next moment, Gertrude, shedding tears of joy and happiness, was in her father's arms.

"Dearest father!" she exclaimed, "you will recover; the color has already returned to your cheeks, and your arms are around my neck. Kiss me again, father. I thank Thee, O my God! he smiles; he is restored to me!"

"My dear child!" he said; "what a blessing heaven bestowed on me in giving me such a daughter!"

He clasped her tenderly to his heart.

All present contemplated this touching scene in silence. Many brushed away the tears which stood in their eyes. Wolfangh, who enjoyed at this moment the recompense of his good action, retired apart, covering his face with his hands. Ludovic contemplated Gertrude with deep affection. She approached, took his hand cordially; then looking around with a radiant smile, she said:

"Wolfangh, where are you? Thanks, thanks," she added, perceiving him; "you have saved my father, and my grateful prayers shall ever be offered to heaven in your behalf."

The eyes of the bandit were wet with tears.

"Noble lady," he said, "I am unworthy of your gratitude. However, I am happy to have been able to do anything pleasing to you. Your joy is an ample reward."

"Wolfangh," said Gertrude, "it pains me to see that a valiant man like yourself—"

"I understand you, lady," replied the bandit;

“but all hope is not lost. Remember me in your prayers.”

Whilst Gertrude talked with Wolfangh, the old Teresa, who had accompanied Gertrude, wept by the side of her master. She filled the hall with her outcries, for this was the first time she had seen Godmaert, and she could not comprehend Gertrude's happiness. She would no doubt have shared it, had she, like his daughter, seen him in imminent danger of death. Obeying Ludovic's injunction, she controlled her violent expression of grief; but she continued to weep and lament.

“Father,” said Gertrude, “permit me to have you carried home; the repose is necessary for you, and your daughter's loving care will be powerful to restore you.”

“Messires,” said Godmaert, “I will now leave you. Prevent, as far as possible, the commission of crime to-morrow, and may heaven protect you!”

All present approached and tenderly bade him adieu.

Wolfangh ordered the litter to be brought.

“My men,” he said, “transport the noble Godmaert home. Keep guard around the house, and remember that you answer for his safety with your lives.”

“Accept my grateful thanks, Wolfangh,” said Gertrude, deeply moved.

The old man, lifted carefully by the four brigands, was borne out of the hall amid the acclamations of his friends.

“Ludovic,” said Schuermans, “we meet at eight o'clock.”

The hall was immediately cleared; the men descended the staircase. Mother Schrikkel, bolting the door as the last one retired, exclaimed:

“Lord Jesus! what will transpire to-day?”

CHAPTER IX.

THE INSURRECTION.

EVERYTHING was arranged for the outbreak of the insurrection by which the Spanish domination in Flanders was to be overthrown. Some of the Gueux, and those chiefly from among the nobility, intended and desired only to combat the foreigners; but there was another powerful motive actuating by far the larger portion of the mass of the people. This was the hatred of sacred images. Peter Herman was the minister at Antwerp who declaimed the most loudly against their veneration. By means of a remarkable eloquence, which he had degraded to base purposes, he had acquired considerable influence over the malcontents, and he had adroitly used it to withdraw them from the Catholic faith. That the people were misled and their judgment blinded by their hatred of Spain, appeared in the sequel by the numbers who abandoned their errors. But at the period of which we write the so-called reform counted many partisans.

On the nineteenth of August, the eve of the day we are speaking of, a sermon had been preached at

Borgerhout. Very many persons were present. A heavy storm obliged them to leave the place. They talked among themselves of the necessity of a church for their assemblies, and this was expressed energetically, with oaths and imprecations. Herman, perceiving that circumstances favored the attainment of his object, stopped the audience a little beyond the gate of the *Kipdorf*, and, mounting the steps of a mill, exclaimed boldly to the people:

“To-morrow, at eight o’clock, there will be a sermon in the church of Our Lady!”

As he descended the steps, the air resounded with the cry, “Long live the Gueux!”

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The dawn of the terrible morrow was breaking in the east. Suddenly a thick, dark cloud arising in the west covered the heavens as with a pall, and obscured the rays of the sun. It seemed as though this splendid pearl of the crown of God was unwilling to shine upon the crimes which were about to be committed, and it had protected itself by a veil of frozen vapor. During the entire day, the atmosphere was loaded with heavy exhalations; the very animals hid themselves as though it were night. The windows and doors were opened in the morning as usual. The peaceful workman repaired to his labor, his wallet furnished with his daily meal; the shopkeepers displayed their merchandise; the servants swept the floors,—not one of them suspected the events so soon to transpire.

At eight o’clock, the tranquil appearance of the city was changed into a scene of tumult, as the people swayed to and fro like a raging sea. Urged by

curiosity, the workmen left their shops, the sailors their ships, the citizens their families, and the muskets of the soldiers glittered amid the crowd. Nothing indicated that horrible crimes would be committed during the day, for at that period it was not unusual to see large crowds collected in the city. At intervals some imprudent and thoughtless pedestrian would cry out: "Long live the Gueux!" and the words would be echoed from one to another throughout the different streets. The largest crowd was on the public square; numerous archers were stationed there before the city hall. The magistrates appeared to have some knowledge of the movements of the Gueux, for the city hall had never before been occupied by so many troops.

Ludovic, Van Halen, Schuermans, and their friends were also there. Some of them had completely disguised themselves. Schuermans had put on the thick waistcoat and blue breeches of a fisherman; the others wore large cloaks and slouched hats.

They were concerting together the best means to be adopted, when they saw the people rushing in a mass to the Cathedral. Eager to protect the holy edifice, they forced their way through the multitude, and succeeded in entering the church. The temple of God was profaned by the blasphemies and oaths of the mob; the clang of arms resounded against the marble columns and floor; and the tombs of the saints were desecrated by the tread of the impious. "The sermon! the sermon!" was vociferated from every part of the sacred edifice. ✓

Herman ascended the pulpit, holding a Bible in his hand. He evidently did not feel himself secure,

for, in the other hand, he held a loaded pistol, with which he threatened to shoot any one who should molest him.

Ludovic and his friends witnessed this scene with impatience.

“There,” said the young man, “is the chief instigator.”

“Shall I stop him at once?” asked Schuermans, of Ludovic.

Upon being answered in the affirmative, he quickly ascended the pulpit, and before Herman had noticed his approach, Schuermans had snatched his pistol from his grasp and cast it to a distance on the marble pavement of the church.

“Away with you, wretch!” he exclaimed, “or I will thrust you out like a dog.”

Herman refused to leave the pulpit. Trusting in the support of his adherents, he endeavored to seize Schuermans; but he, grasping the preacher around the waist, hurled him like a stone in the midst of the crowd, who gave way with loud outcries. Several armed men sprang towards Schuermans to avenge the outrage done to their leader, and but for the instant aid afforded by his friends, the courageous Fleming would undoubtedly have been killed upon the spot. A sharp struggle ensued. The Iconoclasts wished to get possession of the pulpit, and they continued to cry out that these men were Spaniards.

So far, arms had not been used; the contest was confined to blows.

They had fought thus for some time, when a foreigner gave a poniard thrust at Schuermans and slightly wounded him in the arm. A few drops of

blood fell, the sight of which so exasperated his friends that they at once drew their daggers. A bloody contest seemed inevitable, and a number of the spectators rushed into the street with loud cries.

Suddenly those who were near the door of the Cathedral were driven by an irresistible force into the interior of the temple; it seemed as though the pressure of the crowd would move the pulpit from its foundations.

Wolfangh, foaming with rage, entered the church, accompanied by twenty well-armed men. At the sight of these unknown persons, whose very countenances stamped them as assassins, the combat ceased for a moment.

“Ludovic,” said Wolfangh, “what are your commands?” And he brandished his rapier above his head.

“Stop!” said the young man; “our numbers are too small to prevent the sermon; we would uselessly shed blood. We will first go to the city hall, and obtain sufficient aid to secure the success of our enterprise, and we will then return and clear the church of the blasphemers. Come, there is no time for delay.”

They departed, under the impression that the sermon would be continued; but no sooner had they gone, when one long shout arose: “Down with the idols! down with the idols!”

Then the Iconoclasts commenced their work by throwing filth upon the images of the saints. For awhile they contented themselves with this kind of outrage; at last, one of them stood before a statue

of Saint Roch, and crying aloud that animals should not be suffered in the temple of God, he hurled to the ground the marble dog which ornamented the pedestal. Another attempted to cast down the statue of the saint, but it was so firmly attached to the wall that he was unable to move it; he fell to the ground himself, the blood spouting from his mouth and ears.

“Down with the idols! Long live the Gueux!” cried out thousands of voices, and upon the instant the Iconoclasts had provided themselves with ropes, hatchets, mattocks, and other instruments.

Furiously they battered the walls of the edifice, brutally destroying whatever resembled an image. The costly altars of exquisite workmanship, pictures, marble ornaments, all were hurled down, hacked to pieces, or broken with hammers, amid a volley of oaths and imprecations. The holy hosts were snatched from the tabernacle and trampled under foot. It seemed as though the Omnipotent withheld His avenging arm, that their crimes and attendant punishment might accumulate upon their heads.

Until then they had mutilated and broken only the images and other decorations which were within their reach. Against the wall still hung a picture; it was a masterpiece, representing Christ dying on the cross for the salvation of mankind. Many of the Iconoclasts had already cast furious glances upon this painting, but none had dared approach it. Before it stood an old man, his gray hair falling over his shoulders, with a pistol in hand, prepared to discharge it at the first man who should venture to come near.

The desecrators of the temple at last collected in large numbers before the old man, and threw at him fragments of the broken statues, in order to drive him away; but he remained immovable, apparently insensible to all their outrages.

Suddenly one of the aggressors glided behind him and threw him to the ground. The pistol was fired, and one of the assailants received the contents in his breast.

“Kill him! kill him!” resounded through the church.

“My picture! Oh, my Christ!” exclaimed the artist, in despair.

He saw the painting torn from the wall; he saw it fall in shreds by his side, at the very moment that a Gueux pierced his heart with a dagger. The unhappy artist bounded in the death-struggle, and he fell at full length upon his tattered picture, which he had loved as his life. True to the intention expressed to Ludovic, Van Hort had offered his blood as a holocaust to art upon the masterpiece created by his hands.

The Iconoclasts left the body of Van Hort lying upon the ground and resumed the work of destruction. Majestic statues of the twelve Apostles adorned the columns which supported the dome. High ladders were brought, and, provided with ropes and hatchets, the blasphemers did their work so well that the beautifully sculptured images were thrown from their pedestals and broken into a thousand pieces. Many people were wounded by their fall, and the church echoed to their cries and groans. But nothing could restrain these vandals; they had be-

come too infuriated. So encumbered was the ground with the wreck of works of art, that it was difficult to pass through the edifice.

Amid the ruins of these beautiful creations of the painter and sculptor, one magnificent statue stood unharmed. It was that known under the name of Our Lady of Antwerp. A crown composed of the finest diamonds surmounted the head. A mantle of gold cloth embroidered with pearls fell in rich folds from the shoulders. She held the infant Jesus in her arms.

It seemed strange that this exquisite statue with its costly ornaments had been left so long untouched. It occupied a prominent place in the church ; for it stood in the centre upon a magnificent pedestal.

The fanatics had completed the work of destruction with the one exception. They now collected around this image of the Mother of God. There was a moment's pause, as if even their impious hearts were awed by its dazzling loveliness. At last, one among the crowd, reeling from intoxication, staggered towards it, exclaiming :

“Are you afraid of the piece of clay or of the tinsel which covers it? Down with it!” And he concluded with so horrible a blasphemy that his very companions in crime shuddered.

“Shout, Long live the Gueux!” he howled, “or I will crush you to atoms.”

Suiting the action to the words, with a powerful effort he succeeded in casting the statue to the ground.*

* The jewels were stolen, the mantle cut to pieces, the crown broken, and the mutilated statue was left lying on the marble pavement.

Had Wolfangh's men abandoned their chief and joined the Iconoclasts? It seemed probable; for among those who seemed foremost in grasping the jewels as the statue fell, were four or five repulsive-looking men, who one hour before had left the Cathedral with the brigand.

Having demolished all the ornaments of the temple, the frenzied mob began to pillage. They laid their sacrilegious hands upon the sacred vessels, stole ciboriums, ostensoriums, golden crucifixes and chandeliers. They broke into the sacristy, clothed themselves in the vestments, in which they strutted about singing indecent songs.

No hand was raised in opposition to these horrible crimes. Ludovic and Wolfangh, seeing that their numbers were wholly insufficient to contend with the thousands of opponents, had hurried to the city hall, and begged to have a detachment of archers sent to the Cathedral; but a nearer danger prevented the authorities from granting this petition. Suddenly, in the direction of the portion of the city where the Spanish residences were most numerous, the sound of fire-arms was heard, which, together with furious clamors, indicated a bloody contest. A large number of archers immediately deserted their ranks and hastened to their homes, in order to protect their own houses from pillage; so that the burgomaster dared not leave the city hall unprotected by sending elsewhere the few archers who had remained at their post.

The clamor and shots which had been heard were caused by an attack directed against the quarter of the Spaniards by Houtappel and his adherents,

The Spaniards had expected this assault, and they had prepared to defend themselves by arranging their servants and dependants in front of their dwellings. Thus, when the Gueux presented themselves, they met a vigorous resistance, and they were obliged to retreat with the loss of several men. This check only increased their rage. Houtappel harangued his men, and they rushed to the attack with renewed fury.

The Gueux being more numerous than their enemies, gained this time a decided advantage. They pushed forward to the very ranks of the Spaniards, killed all who resisted, put the rest to flight, and remained masters of the field of battle.

The dead and wounded were transported to the *Peerdeken*, where, having provided their companions with proper attention, the Gueux returned to the quarter of the Spaniards, forced the doors of all the houses, and only desisted from the work of pillage and slaughter when not a Spaniard was left upon whom to vent their fury.

During all this time, the Iconoclasts were occupied in demolishing the statuary and pillaging the temple of Our Lady. Herman remained at his post encouraging the people to "destroy the idols," and inciting them to desecrate, in like manner, all the other churches of the city.

They went out from the Cathedral in procession, carrying banners, hangings, silver crosses, and other similar articles. Many wore in mockery chasubles, stoles, and other sacerdotal vestments. They sang in coarse, rough voices, and in a discordant manner, the psalms arranged in rhyme by Clement Marot. They

dragged through the mud the richly-embroidered banners, and then paraded them thus defiled through the streets, while they unceasingly vociferated: "Long live the Gueux!"

Ludovic and Wolfangh, with about a dozen friends, were not far from the city hall, and they witnessed with horror the odious profanation, which they were powerless to prevent. A second time they appealed to the authorities for aid, but the magistrates considered it more prudent not to expose the small number of soldiers who had remained faithful to their duty.

Ludovic, thoroughly discouraged, and scarcely able to restrain tears of rage, was leaning against a column, viewing the scene with horror, when a sight presented itself which caused him to start as if shot by a ball.

"Look, look!" he exclaimed. "The wretches are bearing the Blessed Sacrament! They dare to insult the living God! No consideration must have weight in such circumstances. Come, let us die, if we must; but let us be true to our faith, and snatch the Holy of Holies from the sacrilegious villains?" Saying this, he drew his sword, and was about to precipitate himself upon them, when Wolfangh caught his arm and held him in a tight grasp, whispering in his ear:

"Look at me, Ludovic, and tell me if you do not believe that rage and fury are consuming me, and yet I restrain an imprudent exhibition of it. Leave to me the honor and glory of accomplishing your holy design. You would not succeed, because you could not control your passion. In this case, force is of no avail. Do you remain here and let me go."

Wolfangh drew a dagger from under his cloak, tried the edge with his finger, then glided stealthily among the Iconoclasts until he came near the man who held aloft the Blessed Sacrament. What was his surprise, on recognizing one of his own men! He stopped and unsheathed his dagger; but a sudden thought struck him. Putting his mouth close to the ear of the bandit, he said, decidedly and energetically: "Bernard, you shall die. My dagger is aimed at your heart."

The brigand turned pale as death; a convulsive shudder ran through every limb. He knew the voice of him who spoke in his ear.

"But I will pardon you, and spare your life," he added; "if you give me, unperceived, what you carry in your hands."

The brigand stooped as if to pick up some article from the ground; when he arose, the ostensorium was no longer in his possession. It might have been observed that Wolfangh slightly elevated his cloak with his left elbow. He did not return immediately to join Ludovic, but directed his steps towards the city hall, where he intrusted his precious burden to the charge of the burgomaster.

An hour later, Ludovic left his friends under the pretext of going home, but it was to indulge his sad thoughts unmolested. Wholly absorbed in his sorrow at the horrors he had witnessed, he walked the streets without paying attention to what was going on around him.

A sentiment of shame kept him away from Godmaert. How could he relate all that had occurred, when he had been unable to prevent the commission of the crimes!

The Iconoclasts, seeing how utterly powerless the authorities were to protect the city, continued their devastations. Not an image was left untouched either over a door or in a niche, and if at times a peaceful citizen opposed their violence, he was cruelly maltreated. Many inhabitants, roused by these sacrileges to a sense of the intentions of the Gueux, separated themselves from the party.

The sun shone out from under the clouds, and poured its rays upon the wreck of the works of art piled in heaps in the public square. Groups of men traversed the streets in triumph with shouts of exultation. They carried with them ladders, hatchets, ropes, and other instruments. When, in their progress, they saw an image decorating an edifice, however high it might be placed, they mounted to it amid the acclamations of the mob, and the statue fell upon the pavement broken to pieces, and the multitude applauded.

All the shops were closed, the churches devastated, the public buildings and private houses defaced. Wrecks of exquisite marble encumbered the thoroughfares. One might have supposed that the citizens of Antwerp, struck by sudden madness, were bent upon destroying their own city.

Many of these excesses were committed in the streets and squares through which Ludovic passed. Before the church of Saint James he saw a large fire, which was fed by pictures and other sacred and valuable articles. Reaching the convent of the Recollets, he found the mob engaged in pillaging it, having first expelled and ill-treated the priests. At this sight, he felt a keen anxiety as to the fate of

Father Francis, and, shaking off the excessive grief which had paralyzed his energies, he walked rapidly towards the cattle-market in order to discover the good Father and protect him from insult.

When he came within sight of the Dominican convent, he found it surrounded by so great a crowd, that it was with extreme difficulty he succeeded in gaining the interior, which he found filled with a vandal horde. They were fighting with each other over the silver chandeliers of the chapel; they profaned the holy place by their blasphemies; drunken revellers occupied the refectory of the priests, and joined in shouts and jeers.

Ludovic forced his way through the impious crowd without noticing their insulting raillery; he ascended the staircase leading to the cell of Father Francis; there he found but few persons. The cells were open; many of the doors, by their dilapidated condition, gave evidence of the violence which had been used. The heart of the young man sank within him; and although he continued his search, he had little hope of being in time to serve his friend. Suddenly he heard, at a distance, a shout of triumph.

“Here is another! Cast the dog into the street!”

Ludovic rushed in the direction whence the sounds proceeded, pushed aside three or four persons from the door of an humble cell, and entered; whilst the men, surprised at his sudden advent, and not knowing who he was, allowed him to pass.

Father Francis was lying prostrate upon the ground before a crucifix; he was in fervent prayer. Ludovic cast himself on his knees by his side, and took his hand.

“Father,” he said, “it is I; it is Ludovic, your son. I come to save you.”

The priest, rising to his knees, looked gratefully at Ludovic; then fixing his eyes upon the image of his crucified Lord, he said:

“Ludovic, my dear son, I thank you for this proof of affection, but I will not go with you. I will die here, in this cell, if God now calls me from life. Do not disturb my devotions. I wish to die with the name of the Lord upon my lips. Go, and leave me to my fate.”

Ludovic threw his arm around the priest.

“Leave you to die, my good Father! Never. Come, there is still hope of escape. I will defend you, or I will die with you.”

“Ludovic, be reasonable. The crown of martyrdom is offered me: would you have me reject it? God has granted me seventy years of life upon earth, and now, when my appointed time has come —”

“Your words are holy, Father, but I cannot listen to them. Think of Gertrude; think of Godmaert. You alone can console them; your death would be followed by theirs. As for Godmaert, he would feel that he had been partly the cause of your murder, and that he would, in a measure, be answerable for your blood. You know this would be the case, for he instigated your enemies to revolt. Can you, dear Father, cause him this life-long remorse, and put it in Gertrude’s power to accuse her father of being the author of the crime? No, no; you will not be so cruel. You are too good, too generous, to inflict such pain on your best friend.”

Whilst he thus spoke, Ludovic had gently forced the priest to rise, and had drawn him towards the door.

“I will accompany you, my son,” said the religious at last; “but upon condition that you conform to my wishes as faithfully as if they were positive commands. Perhaps I shall be insulted, ill-treated; you must suffer with me without murmur or resistance. Whatever may happen, even should I be deprived of life, my dying injunction is that you do not revenge my death, that you do not even attempt to defend me. I forbid you to do so. Have you the courage to accept my conditions?”

“Yes, Father; I will do whatever you desire, if you will only go with me.”

They crossed the threshold of the cell; injuries and outrages assailed them at every step they took. They were forced to pass through the crowd in the refectory, who were already maddened by drink. No sooner did the priest appear, than on all sides arose the cry:

“A monk! a monk!”

In an instant, Father Francis was surrounded by the vile miscreants, who insulted him in every manner. One violently pulled his cowl, another threw beer in his face; but the priest, casting down his eyes, slowly moved on, apparently insensible to these outrages; his habit was in shreds, and the beer streamed from his venerable head.

Ludovic looked terrible in his wrath. He was roused to a frenzy; he gnashed his teeth, and unconsciously held the hand of the priest in so tight a grasp that the bones almost broke under the pressure.

But he was determined to observe, at any sacrifice, the orders imposed upon him by the holy old man.

Having been thus brutally treated, they at last reached the cattle-market; but there the difficulties increased for them. A large crowd had collected; some screamed in the ears of the priest oaths and blasphemies; others hurled at him mud and filth.

Perfectly infuriated, Ludovic had several times said to Father Francis:

“Oh! Father, release me from my promise. It is impossible for me to control myself longer; I must defend you. For the love of God, I implore you, let me avenge the insults offered you, and die, if I must.”

But the priest replied:

“O Ludovic, what a happiness to suffer for our fidelity to God! Think of the Christian heroes of ancient times. They were tortured, burned alive, exposed to wild beasts; but from the midst of boiling oil, under the teeth of lions and tigers, a complaint never escaped them; never did they form a wish for revenge; they lifted their pure hands to heaven, and prayed for their executioners. Follow their example, my son; perhaps this very day we may enter heaven with our brows encircled by the crown of martyrdom.”

At the corner of a street not far from the gate of the cattle-market was a house partly built, and near it a heap of broken slate.

Ludovic had hardly passed the place, when a piece of slate grazed his ear. This was followed by a volley of missiles, and one of them struck the uncovered head of Father Francis. When Ludovic

saw the blood streaming down his venerable face, his wrath knew no bounds; forgetting entirely the orders of the Father, he rushed upon the miscreant who had caused the wound, and thrust his sword with such force into his body that the point appeared in his back.

In the meantime, Father Francis had fallen insensible upon the pavement.

Ludovic, uttering a cry of anguish, ran to him, partly raised him, and succeeded in so placing him that his back was supported by the wall of a neighboring house. The persecutors returned with increased fury to the charge—hurling mud and stones and any missile they could lay their hands upon. Not knowing how to save his friend, Ludovic protected him to the best of his power by kneeling before him, and receiving the blows upon his own person. At last, the assailants attacked them on the other side, and some of the projectiles struck the priest. Recovering from his faint, he strove to push Ludovic away.

“O Ludovic! let me die. Do not expose yourself for me, and deprive me of the crown of martyrdom. I will pray for you in heaven. Bid me a last adieu, and go, my son.”

Ludovic made no reply; he was wholly absorbed in watching the stones as they flew around them, that his own body might serve as a shield to protect the priest. The assailants had now become so numerous, that he could no longer ward off the stones from the religious, and he cast his arms around Father Francis, pressing him to his heart.

“Here is the last embrace, Father, but it is not an

adieu. We will die together for our God. I, too, will be a martyr. What happiness!"

He ceased speaking, and bowed his head upon Father Francis's shoulder. And thus he would have remained until death should come to release him, had not a heavy stone which struck the priest, drawn from him unconsciously a cry of pain. Ludovic sprang to his feet, gazed around in agony to see if there was any hope of aid. All at once, he perceived in the distance some men approaching whom he recognized.

Joy illumined his countenance, and he called out in a loud voice:

"Wolfangh! Wolfangh!"

At the very name of Wolfangh, the stones seemed fastened to the hands of the assailants. They looked around in terror to discover if he who bore the dreaded name of Wolfangh was really approaching.

About a dozen men, the friends whom he had left at the city hall, soon joined Ludovic.

"Wolfangh! Schuermans!" he exclaimed, pointing to Father Francis; "see how they have treated an old man of seventy years."

"Ah!" cried Wolfangh, "there are then in the world men worse than myself. The wretches shall pay for this with their blood!"

He cast an eye of pity on Father Francis and one of rage upon the authors of his sufferings; then he caught a dagger in each hand, plunged his head between his shoulders, and rushed roaring like a wild beast upon the crowd. Before Schuermans and the others could follow, several were stretched upon the ground weltering in blood, and the rest had fled, raising an alarm by the cry:

“Wolfangh! Wolfangh!”

Then Wolfangh returned to Father Francis, and contemplated with indignation the noble features of the venerable priest, scarcely to be recognized from the mud and blood which covered them. He seemed petrified by the sight; but soon recovering his presence of mind, he ran to the opposite house, called and knocked at the door; but it was not opened.

Infuriated, he seized a heavy block of stone from the building materials lying near, and hurled it against the door, which was burst in with a loud crash.

Wolfangh soon emerged from the house, carrying in one hand a basin of water, and in the other a linen towel. He knelt by the priest, and bathed his wounds with the skill of a surgeon.

Then was seen the great change which had taken place in Father Francis. The loss of blood had deprived him of strength; he was ashy pale, and his lips were purple. And yet there was on his countenance a heavenly expression of resignation, and an angelic smile illumined his face.

Ludovic, kneeling by his side, aided Wolfangh in dressing his wounds.

“You are saved, dear Father,” said the young man, tenderly. “Your wounds will heal; you will yet be spared to us.”

“Ludovic,” answered the priest, “God has decreed my fate, and granted me the crown of martyrdom. I shall die, not of the wounds you dress; but the last stone crushed my chest. I feel that my last hour has come. Grieve not for me; my fate is too glorious. I will pray for you, my son.”

Wolfangh and Schuermans carefully raised Father Francis, and conducted him slowly towards Godmaert's dwelling, whilst Van Halen and the others formed a guard, determined to shoot down any one who should dare to impede their progress.

Having reached the house, they were admitted by Teresa.

CHAPTER X.

THE DEATH OF FATHER FRANCIS.

GODMAERT and his daughter were seated together in the library. They neither spoke nor moved; all their thoughts and anxiety were concentrated on one point. They knew that the churches had been sacked and desecrated; they had heard that the priests and religious had been driven from their homes and ill-treated. Godmaert was grieved to his soul by the thought that he himself had once given aid to the party guilty of these sacrileges; he thought with terror of Father Francis, of whose fate he was ignorant.

Gertrude was in like manner a prey to the keenest anxiety. She had not seen Ludovic since the preceding night, nor had she been able to obtain the least information as to his movements. Father Francis, who in every situation of sorrow or danger had ever been by her side as a guardian angel, had not been to the house. Her fears, anxiety, and doubts found vent in the frequently reiterated words:

“They are dead! yes, they are dead!”

Suddenly, Teresa rushed into the library, exclaiming:

“They have come! Father Francis and Ludovic are here!”

Gertrude greeted the announcement with an exclamation of joy, and she sprang to the door to meet them.

But when she saw that the garments of Ludovic were covered with mud and blood, when she saw the blood dripping from the wounds of his hands, and, above all, when her eye fell upon Father Francis, she stood terror-stricken and overpowered by grief.

Godmaert mechanically covered his face with his hands to shut out the painful spectacle.

The priest was dying. He was rather lifted than supported by Wolfangh and Schuermans; his limbs refused to take a step. Still, his heart was full of courage and his intellect unclouded.

Gertrude alone, after recovering from the first shock, seemed to have the presence of mind to do what was necessary under the circumstances. Whilst the others gazed with tender compassion upon the venerable old man, Gertrude summoned the servants. One she sent for a surgeon; another for a physician; others were despatched for pillows, sheets, wine, and cordials. She gave her orders with a trembling voice and with burning cheeks, as if she were consumed by fever. Then, without a thought of Ludovic, she approached Father Francis, and wished to place him on the bed which she had prepared; but he objected, and taking Gertrude's hand, he said, whilst a heavenly smile lighted his face:

“My dear daughter, this trouble is useless. I am about to leave this world to be united forever to my God in heaven. But why should you weep for me, when my soul is inundated with happiness, such happiness as I have never known before? I have lived a long life; many favors have been bestowed upon me; and now, unworthy as I am of so great a mercy, the highest grace of all is granted me. I die for the holy name of God!”

Far different was the impression made upon the young girl by these words from what might have been expected. Instead of weeping, joy illumined her countenance; a smile parted her lips, and she gazed upon the priest in a heavenly contemplation. The change was produced by the expression of holiness which settled upon the features of the old man, by his words full of heavenly joy, which made her realize that a death like this was a precious gift from God. The sadness of her soul gave place to a sweet and calm resignation.

“Yes, Father, I understand you. I yield you to death; you may die, and I will not weep for you. I will not complain, for heaven is open to receive you, and a life of eternal felicity awaits you.”

A physician entered, approached the priest and considered him attentively. Godmaert directed his chair to be wheeled close to Father Francis. All watched the countenance of the physician with intense anxiety. At last, Ludovic said:

“Is there any hope?”

The doctor made no reply; but when Ludovic a second time put the same question, he answered:

“He has not more than a half-hour to live!”

A mournful silence succeeded this announcement. Godmaert passed his arm around the neck of his dying friend, and said, whilst tears flowed down his aged cheeks :

“My Father, my friend, tell me that you forgive me. I well know that I am in part answerable for the shedding of your innocent blood, and I shall suffer the penalty unless your prayers avert the punishment. Pardon me. I aided the profanation of the temples of my God. I aided the destruction of the ancient faith. I must bear a terrible responsibility for all the sacrileges committed. I urged on the citizens to those frightful excesses which have cost your life. Oh, pardon ! pardon !”

The face of his friend was illumined by a smile so angelic, his expression was so touchingly kind and benevolent, that Godmaert raised his cold hand to his lips and said, joyfully :

“You have pardoned me !”

The eyes of the priest were becoming glazed, and for a time he seemed unable to reply to Godmaert's supplication for pardon ; but he summoned all his strength to speak for the last time to those who were so dear to him. He made a sign to them to approach nearer to him, and said :

“My children, I am dying. Godmaert, you have sinned, but your repentance is sincere. In the name of God, whose servant I am, I pardon you. Be not afflicted by the fear that the enemies of our faith will triumph. The Church of Jesus Christ is invincible. Her glory is in being persecuted, in struggling with her persecutors lies her strength. Wolfangh, go to the Abbot of Saint Bernard, he will teach you the

path to pursue. The cloister will calm your passions ; you will find favor with God. As for you, my dear children, I appreciate your affection for me. Never waver in your ardent love of God, in your firm attachment to the only true faith. Gertrude, Ludovic, you will be united when the Church—will have laid aside her garments of mourning. From heaven—my soul—will watch over you. Be happy—love each other—” His voice became weak and indistinct. By a strong effort, he extended his right hand and laid it on the heads of the two lovers kneeling by his side, and his lips moved as if in prayer. His hand fell powerless. He raised his eyes to heaven, and with an expiring effort pronounced distinctly the sublime words :

“Glory to God on high, and peace on earth to men of good will.”

14 *

THE END.

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That the reader may judge of the character of this charming volume, we submit the TABLE OF CONTENTS:

1. The Beatific Vision. — 2. In the Beatific Vision, "We shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is." — 3. In the Beatific Vision, our Intellect is glorified, and our Thirst for Knowledge completely gratified. — 4. In the Beatific Vision, our Will is also to be glorified, and then we shall be happy in loving and being loved. — 5. The Beauty and Glory of the Risen Body. — 6. The Spirituality of the Risen Body. — 7. The Impassibility and Immortality of the Risen Body. — 8. Several Errors to be avoided in our Meditations on Heaven. — 9. The Life of the Blessed in Heaven. — 10. Pleasures of the Glorified Senses. — 11. Social joys of Heaven. — 12. Will the knowledge that some of our own are lost, mar our happiness in Heaven? — 13. The Light of Glory. — 14. Degrees of Happiness in Heaven. — 15. Degrees of Enjoyment through the Glorified Senses. — 16. The Glory of Jesus and Mary. — 17. The Glory of the Martyrs. — 18. The Glory of the Doctors and Confessors. — 19. The Glory of Virgins and Religious. — 20. Glory of Penitents and Pious People. — 21. Eternity of Heaven's Happiness.

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Philadelphia Catholic Standard.

Murphy & Co., Publishers and Booksellers, Baltimore.

Happiness of Heaven, Notices of the Press.

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